The Fountain of Life

(Fons Vitae)

by

SOLOMON BEN JUDAH IBN GABIROL

(Avicebron)

Originally translated by Alfred B. Jacob

Revised by Leonard Levin

THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

New York, NY

2005
## CONTENTS

**BOOK ONE**

- **Preliminaries to the identification of universal matter and form and to the identification of the body of the universe**
- **The substance that underlies the physical universe**

**BOOK TWO**

- **The properties of universal matter**
- **The properties of universal form**
- **Universal matter and form taken together**
- **The substratum for universal and for particular forms**
- **The difference between the substance of the celestial sphere and that of the elements; and summary**

---

**PRELIMINARIES TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF UNIVERSAL MATTER AND FORM AND TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE BODY OF THE UNIVERSE**

- The validity of dialectic
- The goal of life
- The development of man's knowledge
- The possibility of knowing the primary Existent
- The nature of universal being
- A single substance but a dual foundation of being
- The three divisions of philosophy
- The nature of the soul
- The fivefold distribution of the present work
- The properties of universal matter
- The chain of discovery of the unmanifest ultimate
- Diversity arises from form, not from matter
- The properties of universal form
- Universal matter and form taken together
- The primordial substratum
- The substratum for universal and for particular forms
- The difference between the substance of the celestial sphere and that of the elements; and summary

---

**THE SUBSTANCE THAT UNDERLIES THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE**

- The identification of primary universal matter
- The chain of sequence of matters and forms
- The form of reason, and of the forms it apprehends
- The separateness of reason-apprehended forms
- Quantity as an example of separateness
- Universal matter, the key to all rational realities
- The manifest lower is the counterpart of the unmanifest higher
- Correspondences between reason and quantity
- The nature of the substance that supports the categories
- Both quantity and remoteness determine the passivity of the substance of the categories
- Matter, substance and hyle described
- Nature as the source of the underlying substance
- The Quality and cause of substance; the rule of will
- Higher and lower place
- Division of complex and of elemental substance
- Substance as divisible quantity or indivisible point
- The parts of quantity
- Divisibility of the smallest part
- Substance permeates the whole of quantity
## CONTENTS

42  How sense-forms can exist at higher levels .............................................................. 156
43  Substantial inactivity .................................................................................................. 158
44  Necessity for outside activation .................................................................................. 159
45  The particular responds to the universal .................................................................... 162
46  The interaction of substances ..................................................................................... 164
47  The functions of Nature and of the Vegetal Soul ....................................................... 166
48  The functions of the Sensing and the Rational Soul and of Reason ....................... 168
49  Higher substances are more inclusive and more active ............................................ 170

### FINAL QUESTIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

50  The cause of motion .................................................................................................... 172
51  The inevitability of mediation ..................................................................................... 175
52  Can substance generate substance? ............................................................................. 177
53  Elemental substance can and does generate substance ............................................. 179
54  SOURCE OF THE [RATIONAL] SOUL ..................................................................... 180
55  How can the divine power be more evident in some subjects than in others? .......... 181
56  The manifest exemplifies the unmanifest ................................................................. 183
57  QUESTIONS ON THE ELEMENTAL SUBSTANCES ................................................... 185
58  Man the measure of the universe ................................................................................ 188

### BOOK FOUR ................................................................................................................. 191

#### ON THE IDEA OF MATTER AND FORM IN ELEMENTAL SUBSTANCES ....... 191

1  Spiritual substances are identical in matter but varied in form ........................................ 191
2  Spiritual substance as revealed by physical, and the source of diversity ......................... 193
3  The divisibility of the transcendent .............................................................................. 195
4  Matter and form in spiritual substances ......................................................................... 196
5  Disposition of universal matters and forms .................................................................... 198
6  The necessity of matter and form through out creation ............................................... 200
7  The matter and form of rational substances .................................................................. 203
8  The nature of body ........................................................................................................ 205
9  The nature of universal primary matter .......................................................................... 207
10  The unity of primary universal matter and its relation to primary universal form .......... 208
11  The oneness of form and twoness of matter ................................................................. 212
12  The form of Reason ..................................................................................................... 214
13  Universal form ............................................................................................................. 215
14  UNITY OF FORM AND MULTIPLICITY OF MATTER ............................................. 217
15  The inclusiveness of form ............................................................................................ 220
16  The lower world, reflection of the higher ...................................................................... 222
17  Similarity of activity between lower and higher ......................................................... 224
18  The gradations of form .................................................................................................. 225
19  Will as intermediary ..................................................................................................... 226
20  The primacy of will ..................................................................................................... 227

### BOOK FIVE .................................................................................................................... 231

#### ON UNIVERSAL MATTER AND UNIVERSAL FORM IN THEMSELVES .... 231

1  Reason's scope of perception ....................................................................................... 231
2  The basis of differentiation between matter and form .................................................. 233
3  The separateness of matter and form .......................................................................... 234
4  Matter alone and form alone ........................................................................................ 235
5  How reason can know matter and form ....................................................................... 237
6  The union of illimitables ............................................................................................... 239
7  The formation and identity of the substance of reason ................................................ 240
8  Existence requires matter and form together ................................................................ 242
9  Form or unity as the cause of matter ............................................................................ 244
10  Matter's potential existence and receptivity ................................................................. 246
11  Matter's inherent but latent existence ........................................................................... 248
12  Review of the existence of universal matter and form ................................................ 249
13  Reason as comprehensive universal form................................................................. 251
14  Reason embraces all forms....................................................................................... 253
15  The mediation of the senses.................................................................................... 255
16  The receptivity of reason ........................................................................................ 257
17  Will, the source of form ......................................................................................... 259
18  The spaceless aggregation of forms......................................................................... 260
19  The hierarchy of inclusiveness .............................................................................. 262
20  The hierarchy of visibility....................................................................................... 264
21  The hierarchy of activity........................................................................................... 265
22  Description of universal matter and form................................................................. 267
23  The activity, value and origin of matter and form .................................................... 268
24  The four categories of existence ............................................................................ 270
SOME FINAL QUESTIONS ............................................................................................ 272
25  The need for sustainer and sustained ....................................................................... 272
26  Matter as unitary, unmanifest and encompassed...................................................... 273
27  The separate existence of matter and form.............................................................. 274
28  The limits of matter, form and reason ...................................................................... 276
29  The possibility of a formless matter.......................................................................... 277
30  THE CONTINUITY OF THE CELESTIAL AND MUNDANE WORLDS ................. 279
31  Unity as the binding principle .................................................................................. 281
32  The longing for Goodness and the One ................................................................... 283
33  Matter’s propensity to accept form.......................................................................... 285
34  Universal affinity for the primary Creator............................................................... 286
35  Unity prevails over all ............................................................................................... 287
36  Motion, the creative Word and will ....................................................................... 288
37  Will, the creator of existence ................................................................................. 290
38  The function of will................................................................................................ 292
39  The omnipresence and omniactivity of will ............................................................ 293
40  The importance and scope of the philosophy of will.............................................. 295
41  The nature of creation ............................................................................................ 296
42  The origin of form and of matter ........................................................................... 298
43  The path to ultimate union.................................................................................... 301
PREFACE TO THE 2005 REVISED TRANSLATION

by Leonard Levin

The work that the reader has the opportunity to view now is the not-yet-final but provisional result of a fascinating and long series of revisions of drafts and versions extending from the 11th century and going through at least four languages and a larger number of redactors. The Arabic original of this work by its original author Solomon Ibn Gabirol did not survive (except in fragments) but was passed down through the medieval Latin translation of John of Spain and Dominicus Guindissalinus, and through the Hebrew abridgement of Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera. Alfred B. Jacob, who taught Romance Languages at several universities, prepared the first full English translation of this work over several decades, with different versions appearing in 1954 and 1987. The current draft preserves Dr. Jacob’s work almost intact except for changes in a half-dozen or so central terms as will be described presently. I have preserved the pagination of Dr. Jacob’s 1987 version, with slight adjustment to improve the consolidation of sentences and paragraphs on the same page.

Speculation on the nature of reality has been a preoccupation of the human race through nearly all of its recorded history. Religion and philosophy are two modes in which this speculation has found expression, and religious philosophy combined the perspectives and formulations of both of these traditions.

Gabirol’s work is a classic of religious philosophy. As such, it partook of the tradition in which it stood as well as breaking new ground in it. The basic vocabulary of the work is derived from the tradition of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and the medieval Arabic philosophers. The new insights in the work give these terms a new twist while building on the semantic import that they had developed over the previous millennium and a half. The dialectical and progressive thrust of Gabirol’s thought depends for its significance on its revaluation of terms with an established legacy. The same can be said of the terminological practice of many of the great historical philosophers.

Some thinkers – both great and minor – have eschewed this path in favor of inventing new vocabularies. (Even so, the new vocabularies often echo the issues and tensions embodied in the old.) In this vein, the American theosophist and astrologer Marc Edmund Jones saw fit to prevail on Dr. Jacob, in sponsoring his translation of the *Fons Vitae*, for the translator to substitute idiosyncratic terms for the standard philosophical vocabulary in the work. The following table summarizes the majority of these substitutions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Term</th>
<th>Jacob’s &amp; Jones’s Substitution</th>
<th>Latin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form (restored)</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>forma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>materia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Animating principle, Life-principle, etc.</td>
<td>anima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>Physical substantiality</td>
<td>corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Transcending</td>
<td>spiritualis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Reasoned purpose</td>
<td>voluntas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celestial</td>
<td>Cosmic (but see III, 50-51)</td>
<td>cælestus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accident</td>
<td>Contingency</td>
<td>accidens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The motivation behind this practice (expressed in Jacob’s preface which follows below) should be appreciated even though its results were deplorable (mainly, in making the work nearly unreadable). First of all, it highlighted the fact that the *Fons Vitae* is not a dogmatic work.
wedded to the outlook of a particular religious faith, but stands on its own as a statement of existential reality. Second, it suggests that despite its genesis in the thought-matrix of medieval culture, this work has the potential to speak to our current age with its view of the world informed by modern scientific discoveries. A reader confronted with the old hackneyed dichotomies of “form-matter,” “body-soul,” “physical-spiritual,” etc. might naively assume that it presents the standard Judeo-Christian picture of reality (if there is one) without modification. A new vocabulary would challenge this presupposition at the outset.1

The challenge is well heeded. Gabirol’s philosophy does think outside the box. Though using the traditional terms, he radically transforms their meaning.2 Soul and body, form and matter are not stark dichotomies for him, but the two sides of a Moebius strip, or two strands whose complex interweave depict a subtle tapestry of being in which everything is the flip-side of its counterpart and inextricably bound up with it. What is form in one instance can become matter in another connection, and vice versa. Mind itself has a material basis. It is possible that Gabirol was anticipating Spinoza’s mind-body monism, or the paradoxical mind-body interactions depicted in a work like Hofstaedter’s Gödel, Escher, Bach.

But he makes his point in the traditional vocabulary, and we should be alert to it despite that vocabulary. Moreover, his meanings are only fully understandable in the context of his allusions to Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, all of whom used that vocabulary and none of whom was Christian, Moslem or Jewish. Not least of all, the concise words of that vocabulary (in any of the languages that were part of that tradition) convey the meaning more immediately and more clearly to the reader than Jones’s clumsy circumlocutions which marred Jacob’s otherwise-admirable 1987 translation. Restoring the traditional vocabulary makes the work more readable and enables Jacob’s sensitive rendering of the work to shine through more clearly.

1 I have retained the Jacob-Jones terminology (despite occasional hesitation) in nearly all other respects, both out of respect for the integrity of Jacob’s rendition (which is admirable despite an occasional stiltedness) and because the word-choices have the merit of originality and forcing us to think more deeply about the meaning of the original work. Here are several other equivalents to aid the reader in relating this version to other cognate works (the Wedeck referred to is the Harry E. Wedeck translation of Part III, published as The Fountain of Life, Philosophical Library, New York 1962):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jacob’s term (retained)</th>
<th>Wedeck</th>
<th>Latin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>finitus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illimitable</td>
<td>infinite</td>
<td>non finitus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elemental</td>
<td>simple</td>
<td>simplex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outflow</td>
<td>emanation</td>
<td>effluxio, effluere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmanifest</td>
<td>invisible, obscure</td>
<td>occultus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rendering of “elemental” for simplex (as in “elemental substances” which play such a central part in Gabirol’s thought) is somewhat daring but fruitful. “Elemental” connotes a generative aspect, and in addition to being simple in constitution the elemental substances serve a constitutive role in the generation of all “lower” reality, as is made explicit in III, 53 and is implicit throughout the work.

2 “Will” (referring almost always implicitly to the divine will) is a key concept of Gabirol’s thought (explicated admirably by Klausner in the essay following this preface). Jacob’s rendering of “reasoned purpose” was on target, reminding us that in Gabirol’s view the divine will operates purposively and rationally, not capriciously or arbitrarily. “Will” is much more readable, especially given the frequent occurrence of the term. It is a good idea, though, to keep “reasoned purpose” in the back of the mind as part of its primary connotation.
A number of Gabirol’s early readers criticized him for being overly prolix. The criticism is well-founded. The late-medieval Jewish philosopher Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera saw fit to translate selected portions of the Arabic into Hebrew, thus creating a Cliff-Notes-style epitome that presents the essential thought of the work concisely without the digressions and endless variations on the themes. In the standard edition of the Latin text (1895), Clemens Baeumker indicated the passages that were parallel to Falaquera’s epitome. I have followed Baeumker’s identification of the passages and checked them against the modern Hebrew edition of Falaquera’s version. These passages are marked in bold in the current edition, prefaced with an indication of the corresponding paragraph in Falaquera. Where Falaquera combined several extracts into a single paragraph, I have followed Baeumker in labeling them (28a, 28b, etc.). The reader who is put off by the complexity of Gabirol’s presentation is advised to scan for the passages in bold and read them first by themselves, then go back and read the entire text from which they were extracted (much as the modern reader will highlight the key passages in a book for his own benefit in reviewing – and the unintended benefit of subsequent readers).
Solomon ben Judah Ibn Gabirol, known to the Middle Ages as Avicebron, was the outstanding philosopher poet of the eleventh century, important in the transmission of Greek thinking to modern Europe, and highly original in his own formulations. His outstanding philosophical work, *The Fountain of Life*, has never before been wholly rendered into English.

The twelfth-century Latin into which the original Arabic was converted was inadequate for the well-developed philosophical quality of the original, and there can be no reliable equivalence of meanings. A single Latin word may require a variety of renditions and different Latin words may represent a single idea. The informed judgment of the translator is constantly called into play.

[Jacob here gives his rationale for the terminology adopted in the 1987 edition. Though the 2005 edition restores the traditional philosophical vocabulary, Jacob’s explanation is worthwhile as a record of Jacob’s and Jones’s original intentions, which are an implicit commentary on Gabirol’s intellectual project and its relation to possible modern interpretations of it. – LL]

Particular care has been taken to avoid English equivalents that carry too great a weight of religious preconception and would thus defeat the consistent rationality and remarkable ecumenicity of the author, whose exposition contains no elements that identify him as Christian, Muslim or Jew. Hence "soul" is inappropriate for anima in any of its several meanings, and corpus cannot be rendered as "body" because all terms must be equally applicable to the microcosmic and the macrocosmic sphere.

Clemens Baeumker’s collation of the then-known four manuscripts (1895) is wholly praiseworthy, and the subsequently discovered Toledo manuscript offers few variants. Baeumker’s *Index rerum* lists all important words with examples of their use carefully classified according to meaning but with no other attempt at definition. In it, however, are included many useful distinctions and clarifications without access to which a translator would risk drawing erroneous conclusions. For example *essentia* may stand for *existentia* or *forma* or even *materia*, and occasionally represents *essentia prima*.


The numbered sections have been given titles and a brief resume of each has been provided. Footnotes and references designate similarities to Aristotle and signal related passages, but to classify Ibn Gabirol as an adherent of one or another school would be to doubt his originality and his ability to assimilate and utilize the whole of the Greek intellectual contribution to the Arabic-speaking world of the eleventh century.

This translation was prepared at the request of Dr. Marc Edmund Jones, who projected a full commentary. First issued in 1954, it has now been totally revised, although unfortunately too late for the nonagenarian scholar to realize his intention. Many of the translation equivalents have been determined by him and the mark of his unique insight pervades the work.
Like Philo Judaeus in an earlier time, R. Solomon Ibn Gabirol, the Jewish poet-philosopher, faced the following problem: The Prime Being, the God of Israel, is absolutely spiritual and absolutely one, without imperfection or plurality, without materiality or pollution or evil. How can such a being create this material world which is polluted, imperfect, and a mixture of good and evil? How can the impure emerge from the pure?

Philo responded to this that God did not create the world by Himself, as it were, but through the agency of the Logos, the divine utterance. This is a Jewish idea (Pirkei Avot 5:1 says: “By ten utterances the world was created”) cloaked in Greek garb. The Greek Plotinus found Philo’s answer insufficient. If God creates the world through the Logos which itself is a tool of God’s artistry, it is still God who is creating. How can we imagine that the absolutely pure, spiritual God should create a world that is quite material and corporeal? Therefore Plotinus developed his doctrine of emanation: God does not create the world at all, and does not even condition matter from the start, but the world emanates from God, who remains wholly transcendental with respect to the world. Indeed, in Plotinus, once the first emanation has proceeded from God, it is as if God is no longer in the picture…

The Jewish Gabirol was not able to come to terms with this passive emanation, and he sought to discover a kind of emanation in which God would still play a sufficiently active role, so that the emanating divinity – the God of Israel – would be a living God, and would also be the God of the world, from whom everything proceeds, and who would be conceived philosophically in the same way as in the Torah, a divinity without any corporeal aspect. This God must be a Fountain of Life, an ever-gushing spring, whose living waters do not cease even for an instant, and at the same time He should be abstract and spiritual like the light, which though it has no material substance, nevertheless is felt through its pure activity. “For with You is the fountain of life; by Your light do we see light.” (Psalm 36:10)

In the “Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer,” light is regarded as the medium of creation. (This would be transformed later into the “radiant light” in philosophy and kabbalah.) Mishnah Avot knew of God’s “utterance” and Philo of the Logos, while Saadia Gaon conceived of a “created voice” in this capacity. Gabirol found an intermediary of creation similar to the divine utterance but more fitting to his purpose – the Will.

Where does Gabirol’s “Will” derive from? Why does he use this as a replacement for Avot’s and Philo’s “utterance,” with which he equates the Will, as we shall see later?

The Jew depicts God as all-knowing, all-observing, and infinitely wise. Nevertheless, he prays to Him. He makes requests of Him. He pleads with God to do X and not Y. How is this possible? Does the worshipper know better than God what ought to be and what ought not to be? Is there any lapse in God’s knowledge, God forbid, that the person needs to correct through his prayer? The Jewish tradition was sophisticated enough, and wary of anthropomorphism, to be sensitive to this danger of prayer, that a mortal born to corruption should be giving advice to the

---

3 From: R. Solomon Ibn Gabirol: The Man, the Poet, & the Philosopher, by Joseph Klausner (Published in Hebrew as Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Gabirol: Ha-Adam, ha-Meshorer, ha-Filosof, 1926), translation by Leonard Levin.

4 See Klausner: Historia Israelit (Jerusalem, 1925) IV: 57-61.
omniscient God. It therefore phrased its prayers with the locution, “May it be Your will, O Lord our God…” that things should be thus-and-such. In other words, man does not request of God to do X according to mortal human understanding and human request. Rather, the person yearns and prays that the divine will should correspond to the will and request of the human petitioner. As Ibn Gabirol had written the most exalted and profound liturgical poems, it is impossible that he should not have paid attention to this role of the “divine will” in Jewish prayer. After all, it was he who had written, in the poem we cited earlier, “’Tis joy to me,” the purest expression of prayer to God: “Let my will further Your will.” It was this classic invocation of the divine will that pressed Gabirol toward this marvelous innovation that put a new twist on the notion of Philo and Plotinus.

There are three kinds of knowledge essential for the philosophical seeker in The Fountain of Life: Knowledge of the Prime Being, knowledge of the Will, and knowledge of Matter and Form.

We cannot know the essence of the Prime Being, because it is above all and infinite. Whatever we know, we know through self-knowledge and analogy with it. But the Prime Being “is not at all like the soul, and there is no similarity between them,” for the Prime Being “is not connected to the composite entities or to the simple ones.” Furthermore, all true knowledge is embracing and encompassing of its object, i.e. the knower has the ability to embrace the known thing in himself and encompass it in his mind. But since the Prime being is infinite and without matter or form, while everything outside Him is composed of matter and form, “it cannot be encompassed by knowledge,” which is essentially finite, and because even our intellect, the source of our knowledge, is composed of matter and form. We can therefore determine, “on the basis of His works,” “when we contemplate all creations that were created by Him,” only one thing, “that He exists.” Thus we know of the Prime Being only that He Is, but not what is His existence. “With respect to the One, may He be exalted and sanctified, there is no question of the what, the how, or the why, but only that He exists.” This definition of divinity is similar to that of Philo.

Since even the knowledge of the Prime Being is known to us only through His works, Gabirol often calls him the “Prime Creator.” By this language he hints that his “Prime Being” or “Supreme Substance” is not merely an abstract foundation of being that has no formative influence or creative role, as we find in Plotinus.

It is clearly understood that the Supreme Being is one. But His Oneness is sui generis. We say of intelligible and sensory entities that they are “one,” but they are one of a series, one possession among others, a relative oneness, one of many kinds of oneness. But “the Prime Creator alone is the true One, who has no multiplicity,” and he is not only one but the First, “the beginning of all things.” As Prime Agent he is also the Creator in the true meaning of this

---

5 *Fountain of Life* 1:5.
6 FL 4:6.
7 FL 4:6, 4:5, 3:1.
8 FL 1:4.
9 FL 5:24.

12 FL 3:2(3).
13 FL 3:10 (55).
word, from whom everything flows. “There is only one Creator ex nihilo, and that is the Prime Agent, may He be exalted and sanctified.”

Here begins the question alluded to earlier: “How can it be that the divine power should be diminished and transformed and be materialized, and how can the act of the supreme and holy Creator be more manifest in one entity than in another, when the divine omnipotence is the sum total of all power and perfection, and the ultimate of all power and supremacy?”

To this serious question, the single answer is offered: there must be mediating powers between the Supreme Being, who is absolutely spiritual, and matter that is at the lowest extreme. These “mediating powers” are: will, universal matter, universal form, universal intellect, universal soul, nature, and (finally after all of these) the “substance that supports the nine categories, which is the last of the three substances that flow from the “Prime Creator.”

What is the will?

Ibn Gabirol does not find it possible to give a complete explanation of this great secret, but he can give an approximate definition, for “the exposition of the will would be a lengthy one for the theory of the will is the ultimate objective of wisdom.” Furthermore, “all philosophy is implicit in this doctrine.” He even wrote a separate book on the will entitled “the Source of Effluence and the Cause of Generation,” which seems to have been lost. Nevertheless, in the Fountain of Life he explains the grounds of the will’s possibility and its essence in general parameters. In general, we must assume that “between the Prime Creator, may He be sanctified and exalted, and the substance of the nine categories, there must be a mediating substance. This can be established on a prior principle as follows: If the first of all beings is the uncreated Prime Creator, and the last is that being which is created but does not create anything, there must be a certain intermediate possibility between these two extremes, in essence and in activity, for without this, the first would be the last, and the last would be the first.”

We saw that the three prime subjects of knowledge are the First Being, the Will, and Matter-and-Form. Thus, “Will” is the mediating term between the two extremes, between the First Being and Matter-and-Form. To explain this by analogy, Gabirol says, “An analogy of matter-and-form is the human body and its form (by ‘form’ you must here understand the configuration of its limbs). The analogy with ‘will’ would be the soul, and the analogy with the ‘First Being’ would be the intellect.” For “the will is the divine power that provides all things with existence and movement,” for “movement, by which all things were formed, depends on will.” The will is “a divine power that pervades all and spreads through all, as light through the air, the soul through the body and the intellect through the soul.” Though matter comes from God and form comes from the will, as we shall see later, nevertheless matter and form together branch out from the will: “Will moves every form subsisting in matter and leads it to the outermost limit of matter.” Thus the counterpart of will is not only form, but also matter, for matter can be conceived without form only potentially, not actually.
Gabirol calls the will “utterance” or “word” (verbum) – corresponding to Philo’s Logos and the Mishnah’s “ma’amar. Twice he says explicitly: “The creative word, i.e. the will” / “The will, i.e. the word,” for the act of creation, by which God created the simple (non-composite, supernal) entities by the will, may be compared to the word that a person utters from his mouth, which is impressed on the hearing and mind of the listener. Even though the word has no tangible substance and cannot be grasped in one’s hands, nevertheless it has a real active effect. Similarly when the Creator’s utterance is impressed in the substance of matter, so the form, which comes from the will is embedded in that matter.

What, then, is the relation between the will and God?

The will is, in a certain sense, an image or simulacrum of divinity (like the “Shekhinah” in the Talmudic aggadah). In substance, the will and divinity are the same, for in itself – in essence, as potential – the will is nothing other than a power or quality of God. But when it is activated – in its active effect, the will is distinguishable from the “Prime Creator.” Gabirol has no hesitation about making this distinction: The will is infinite in its substance, if we do not reckon with its activity; but it is not infinite with respect to the universal form that is emanated from it. “The will considered in itself, if we do not reckon with its activity, is neither intermediate nor limited, but it and the [divine] substance are one.”

Thus God and [His] will are one. But in the moment of creation, the will is as if separated from God and creates the universal form on its own, and through it the totality of existing beings; but at the same moment it becomes finite in a certain sense, as with everything that creates an effect outside itself, which is impossible without a beginning.

Thus Gabirol arrives at the creation without necessity of an unconditioned emanation from the Creator-God Himself, similar to the case in Plotinus, but through an activity in the Godhead that is voluntary and in that sense free. God in His unfathomable goodness has as His will to bestow effluence throughout all the worlds. Thus He forms the world by degrees through the permeation of His will from one simple substance to a lower subsance, until we arrive at the substance of our material world. Thus Gabirol, like Philo in a previous age, salvaged the core of Jewish monotheism within a framework of neo-Platonic pantheism. He says: “The will dwells on high with the blessed Creator, in whom every form exists in its fullness and perfection, for He is in everything and everything is in Him. Matter does not receive from the will all that is in the will’s power to give, but only what matter in its essence is able to receive.”

The “Prime Creator” creates through the agency of the first mediator – the will. The will, then, is the first emanation from God – an emanation with respect to activity, whereas with respect to substance there is no change in the Supreme Being.

In this way Gabirol avoids several pitfalls. If there is no emanation, but only direct creation, then polluted matter is created by pure spirit, and plurality is generated from absolute unity. If there is simple emanation, the emanated must resemble absolutely that which it emanated from, and so there is no progress toward explaining the generation of the material-spiritual world. If the emanated is separate and different from the Emanator (the First Being), then plurality comes from unity and change occurs to the First Being Himself, for originally the

---

24 FL 5:36 explicitly; FL 5:30 and 5:43 implicitly using “word” in place of “will” in the argument.
25 FL 5:43.
26 FL 4:19.
27 “Will, which is the power that creates these [simple] substances, is limited in its effect but unlimited in its essence. This being so, its effect will be limited. But will is only limited insofar as its effect has a beginning and therefore follows after the will. But the will is unlimited with respect to its own essence, which is without beginning.” (FL 3:57)
28 FL 5:17.
emanated did not come forth from Him but afterwards it did, and so the Emanator is different than He was. But inasmuch as the will is absolutely identical in substance to the Prime Creator, but different from Him at the moment that the will goes into action before the Creator, for then the will becomes finite because every action has a beginning and so it is limited – in that way the First Being remains as He was, without any change, and nevertheless there is progress toward generation – though through many intermediaries, for the way to producing the material-spiritual world is still a long one. This also answers another problem: If the will is finite, how can it be contained in the substance of the First Being, who is infinite? And if the will is infinite, how did it produce the world-generating process (that started with simple substances and ended with substances that are described by the categories), which is finite in a certain sense? But if the will is infinite in substance, then it can have connection in its substance to the “Prime Creator,” and if it is finite in its action it can be connected through that action to the simple substances, which are finite because they have a beginning.

How does the will operate?

The notion of the activity of the divine will is conceived by the poet-philosopher on the basis of his contemplation of the activity of the individual will: “An analogy of the will that moves all entities and bodies is found in the will of the [human] soul that moves the body or induces rest in some of the limbs, such as the rest that occurs when one holds one’s breath so as not to interfere with another bodily movement.” But indeed the will operates without moving, for the will itself undergoes no change, since it proceeds from absolute unity. Nevertheless, “all spiritual and corporeal entities receive their movement from the will.” As to the question, if the will itself is at rest, how does it penetrate the simple substances and generate movement? He gives the answer, “This is the most difficult question in the theory of the will. The will penetrates everything without movement and acts on everything atemporally by the force of its power and unity, just as light is propagated instantaneously without [visible] movement and without [perceivable] time.”

For truly one should not call the action of will action in the proper sense. It is penetration, or – in the language of R. Shem Tov Falaquera in his translation-abridgement – *pillush* [= permeation]. The will permeates universal matter and universal form as the sun permeates the darkness with its rays, and sparks of light spread in the space of the universe. This is what happens on an overcast day: even then the sunlight permeates the clouds and lights up the earth, though its light is dimmed somewhat. Or in Gabirol’s language: “The penetration and permeation of the will are like the sun’s power of penetration, or its power of diffusion [*virtutis diffundentis lumen*] and its identity with the light of sun in the air. The will is like the power, the form is like the light, and air is like the matter.”

“Movement comes from will through its shadow and radiation (*ab umbra ejus et a radio ejus*).” From the will proceeds radiation (*irradiatio*34), and it passes through universal matter and universal form as the sunlight is propagated through the air and arrives to us; and by the shadow that the will casts on substances, and by the rays that are conveyed directly to the substances, the spiritual and material substances are set in motion, even though the will itself is not in motion.

But the will acts first of all on universal matter and on universal form (which we should be careful not to confuse with the matter and form of our lowly world!). “The will acts like a

29 FL 5:37.
30 Ibid.
31 FL 5:39.
32 FL 5:38 (end).
33 FL 5:36.
34 FL 3:16, Baeumker edition p. 113 line 5.
scribe, and the form receives the action like the written script, and the matter is subservient to
them, like the tablet or parchment.”33 The matter is less than the form and yet more than it at the
same time. On the one hand, matter is not “privation” or “non-being” as in Plato, but rather – in
Gabirol’s coinage in the song “I love you” (cited in a previous chapter) “quasi-being”; for even
by itself matter has potential being. It has actual being only conjoined with form, “that causes
each thing to be what it is.”34 On the other hand, form is sustained by matter; universal matter
sustains universal form, and so matter is prerequisite to form in a certain sense (but only in a
certain sense, for in actual fact the artisan does not have matter without form or form without
matter except potentially). The image for the state of matter prior to receiving form and
afterwards is the air, which in the early dawn is only slightly suffused with light, but when the
sun is high in the sky the air is so filled with light and radiance that it can absorb no more from
the sun.35 The attachment of the form to matter can be depicted “as the attachment of light to the
air or melody to the voice, for in each case the attachment is so close that one cannot draw a
boundary between the two aspects,” or “like the attachment of the intellect to the soul, or the soul
to its affections or to the body to which it is connected” – or, to use another analogy, “like the
attachment of the intellect to its idea, or of sense to its perception.”36 Thus despite the preference
for form over matter, matter seems to precede form. Therefore Gabirol has matter coming from
the Prime Creator, while form comes from the attribute of the Prime Creator, i.e. from will. “the
form’s procession from nonexistence to existence by the agency of God (may He be exalted and
sanctified) is like the reaching-out of the intellect from its self toward the cognized object, or the
extension of the sense to the perceived object.”37 And the activity of the will is “to connect the
matter to the form and to extend from the highest to the lowest just as the soul extends through
the body. Thus the will is the divine force that moves and governs all.”38

But how is this activity of the will made possible?

To this question, Gabirol replies: “Matter has no existence except through form, for
existence derives from form, and so matter is moved to receive form, i.e. to progress from
the pain of non-being to the pleasure of being.”39 Thus matter receives form by way of motion, and
the power that moves all is the will. Indeed, “the motion of matter and all other substances is
desire and love,” which are none other than the yearning and longing to move closer toward God
in order to unite with the One who is the Good (and form is nothing else than His influence) – to
unite with the Godhead via the will. All beings “yearn for unity,” and “matter strives to combine
with form,” therefore “the movement of matter and other substances is desire and love.”40 Since
all this comes about through the agency of will, author of motion, therefore everything comes
from will and all is included in it. We have here the idea expressed in the poem “I love you,” that
the quasi-real (matter in potential) yearns to be made “really real” (matter actualized) “like the
lover yearns for the beloved.” From here comes the fundamental idea of the wonder
philosophical book Dialogues of Love of Judah Abravanel, another of those rare philosophical
books written by Jews without a Jewish theological agenda or special religious-national purpose,
but written to address general human problems. We have here one of the two major principles of
Schopenhauer’s philosophy expressed in The World as Will and Representation (the other
principle, “representation,” is of course from Kant). We shall return to this in a later chapter.

35 FL 5:35.
36 FL 1:13, expressing an Aristotelian notion.
37 FL 5:33.
38 FL 5:6.
39 FL 5:6 (end).
40 FL 5:38 (beginning).
41 FL 5:39.
42 FL 5:32.
Matter and form are (together with the divine quality of will) the first rung in the hierarchy of being that is a basic component of Gabirol’s system. All being is like a ladder standing on earth with its top in heaven. The top is the Prime Creator who has only existence, and the bottom consists of the composite material-spiritual beings of the terrestrial world. In between are all the supernal mediating powers we mentioned earlier: will, universal matter, universal form, universal intellect, universal soul, and finally universal nature, which is the transition to the substance that supports the nine categories. Each of these “simple substances” is a substrate for the next one below it and the product of the one above it. Gabirol explains this as follows: “Arrange all these entities in your imagination in a way that each supports the next and the other subsists in it, and picture the series as having two extremes, one higher and one lower. The higher includes the others – thus universal matter is only in a supporting capacity; while the lowest – the form of sensible objects – is only in a supported capacity. Between these two extremes, whatever is more exalted and subtle serves as matter for whatever is lower and grosser, while the latter serves as form for it. Accordingly, the corporeality of the world, that is the manifest matter that supports the form subsisting in it, must be form subsisting in ethereal matter, and this ethereal matter must serve as form to whatever comes after it, until we come to the first matter that contains all.”

Even this hierarchy of simple substances is a kind of radiation: “The highest extreme is like the sun and the lowest is like the rays of the sun diffused in the space of the universe.” The intellectual substances “that penetrate and permeate the body as the sun penetrates the barrier confronting it and permeates it.”

As for the substances, the farther that they get from the first “supernal source,” the more corporeal they become. Not that the simple substances differ essentially, but whenever light passes through a body, no matter how simple and spiritual it is, “the greater the depth of the body, the denser and more substantial it becomes, and its intervening parts obstruct the final parts from being fully penetrated by the brightness.” The permeation is unequal – not that the simple substances differ in corporeality. The poet in Gabirol finds apt analogies here: “We may compare it to sunlight mingled in a thick cloud, or like a sheer white veil covering a black body – the whiteness will be inconspicuous next to the predominant blackness. It is also like light that traverses three glass panes: the second pane receives less light than the first, and the third less than the second. It is clear that this is not because the light is weak, but because the panes obstruct the light’s passage, because of their density.” Through these analogies we come to the conclusion that the progressive corporeality as we descend the ladder is not due to any intrinsic difference in the intrinsic substances: “The light in itself is the same, and the lower part is of the same essence as the upper. But it becomes obscured for the same reason as with the light traversing many glass panes, or with the sunlight passing through murky air the light is affected in such an atmosphere, so that it does not have the same strength and perfection that it would if the air were clear.”

But there is still a serious question: How is it possible that simple substances should pass through each other and become grosser in the process? Isn’t a substance able to transmit only what is in its own essence? To this, Gabirol replies: “The essences of the simple substances do not get transmitted, but only their powers and rays flow forth and are diffused. The essence of all these substances are finite and delimited and do not extend to infinity, but their rays flow forth from them, burst their bounds and limits because they are subsumed in the primal flow that proceeds from the will. Just as the sunlight in the air has left the surface of the sun and spreads through the air, while the sun itself never exceeds its bounds, and just as the vital force that flows through the air...”

43 FL 2:1; see 2:14 and 2:21, 2:23 and 2:52.
44 FL 2:8, and see 2:14.
45 2:9 end.
46 FL 4:14.
from the mind whose seat is in the brain, flows through the nerves and muscles thus permeating the whole body, while the soul itself stays put and does not flow forth — so, too, does each of the simple substances send forth its rays and light and diffuses them through everything below it, while the substance itself preserves its set limits and does not exceed its bounds.”

Here, too, radiation is the common activity of the will and the simple substances. Or more correctly, it is the activity of the will working through the simple substances, for they act by its power, each one on the next one below it, like the activity of the rays from the power of the sun. This analogy with the sun and light was the poet-philosopher’s favorite. And he had another analogy: the flow of substances proceeding one from the next is an analogy with water flowing from the source, for they gush and flow down an incline, and waves generate waves: “The waters are originally clear and transparent, but gradually they grow cloudy as they gather in a pond and become murky.”

And more pointedly: “The creation of all things by the Creator — i.e., production of the form from the First Source — i.e., from the will — is like the gushing of waters that stream forth from their source and pour out, portion by portion, only the pouring out is without ceasing and without rest, while it takes place without motion and without time.” Ibn Gabirol always seems to have in mind the verse: “For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light do we see light.”

Ibn Gabirol always seems to have in mind the verse: “For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light do we see light.”

He expresses time after time that there is unity in all being, from the highest to the lowest. The variations that we see in existence prove nothing. The forms of the simple substance received their various appearances because of their being combined with the form of a lower substance: “They are like a delicate translucent white veil attached to a black or red object, which takes on the darker color and seems altered in our sight, but which is not altered at all in its essential reality.” So there is real unity despite plurality. Indeed, “every emanated thing is like the emanator, and things only flow from like things.” And: “If a lower thing emanates from a higher, whatever is in the lower thing must be present in the higher.”

More precisely: “The lower of two substances is form to the higher, and the higher substance is the matter that supports the lower, until we arrive at the first matter that is absolutely simple.” Therefore the qualities of that first matter must necessarily be in everything.

We have here a kind of pantheism, but a Jewish pantheism. Everything is included in God, but God is not included in the world. He is a separate substance, not a subsumed substance like Spinoza’s God. He creates (being the Prime Creator) but He creates through the will or the “word” in the capacity of a first emanation whose essence is comprised in God but whose action is separate. His effluence proceeds downward through the will by stages, until it reaches the last level of existence. This is the same Jewish pantheism that was taken as fundamental by all mystics who were faithful to the essentials of Judaism, from the first kabbalists through the Baal Shem Tov and the author of the “Tanya” (following the deeper meaning of “You give life to all of them”). In Gabirol’s time this whole outlook was quite new (though not entirely) and aroused opposition especially in rationalist philosophical circles, where
Aristotelianism was already starting to dominate. If they did not know definitely, they
nevertheless had a sense that there was an inner contradiction in the notion of “mediating forces,”
whether the simple substances or especially the will. This was the same contradiction that one
found in Philo’s “intellectual potencies”: on the one hand, the “mediating powers” (starting with
the “Logos” itself) are a separate part of divinity, inasmuch as the Godhead includes them and
acts through them; but on the other hand, they are included in the Godhead as part of its
substantive essence. But when I elsewhere discussed Philo and this contradiction in his teaching,
I remarked that even the notion of “Shekhinah” in the Talmud and Midrash embodies a similar
contradiction: it is presented as an entity separate from God but also as identical with God.55
Indeed, in the heyday of rationalism they were wary of the slightest degree of anthropomorphism
that could result from the concept of the will, just as they were similarly wary in an earlier age of
Philo’s Logos and excised it from Judaism, whereupon the Christians took a liking to it – and as
the philosophers were later wary of the pantheism of the kabbalah, which did indeed involve a
certain measure of anthropomorphism. And so opposition developed to R. Solomon Ibn Gabirol,
and his book Fountain of Life was not translated wholly into Hebrew nor regarded as holy by the
Jewish people, while his notion of the “will” was embraced by the Christian Scholastics (as I will
discuss in Chapter 8).

Still another view of Ibn Gabirol aroused spirited opposition.

We are speaking all the time of matter and form. But we must remember that these are
not really-existing matter and form, and that there is no matter without form or form without
matter. Universal matter is a totally abstract notion, and yet spiritual matter has a faint
corporeality about it, whereas even spiritual form has fine matter in it, and every matter has some
spirituality in it. This is Gabirol’s great innovation in the theory of matter and form. He
distinguishes between materiality and corporeality, between simplicity and spirituality, and he
decides: If spiritual matter and spiritual form are the prime elements of existence, then they must
be found in every existing thing. If they are found in everything, then every corporeal substance
must contain spiritual matter, and every corporeal form must contain spiritual form, for the
corporeal forms are the pattern of the spiritual.56 Gabirol says explicitly, “Just as there are matter
and form among the corporeal spheres, so too among the spiritual,”57 for “the spiritual substance
is also composed of matter and form.”58 Gabirol must think thus; for if not, how is the gradation
from highest spirit to lowest matter possible? Surely from absolute nothing, there can be no
gradual emergence of something (for gradation is not creation – this is a basic principle of
Gabirol’s method). If the power of the highest is in the lowest, and also the reverse, then the very
highest beings (except for the Prime Creator and the will) must have a certain “matter” that
becomes corporealized and thickened on its way down the hierarchy until it becomes the matter
that is familiar to us. Moreover, all variations are achieved in matter by means of form. If the
highest simple substances that have no composition have no matter, then in what are the
variations impressed? Therefore Gabirol was forced to come up with the new idea that there is
matter even in the most spiritual simple substances – of course, not matter in the common human
sense, but extremely fine and delicate.

It followed necessarily from this that even the angels, which are simple substances,
contain pure, fine matter. This would later lay the basis for a dispute between the Franciscans
and the Dominicans.59 Jewish philosophers in Gabirol’s time and afterwards did not agree with

---

55 Klausner, The History of Israel, IV 58-59.
56 FL 3:24.
57 FL 4:1.
58 FL 4:4.
59 See Chapter 8 of Klausner: R. Solomon Ibn Gabirol: The Man, the Poet, & the Philosopher.
this view of the materiality of the angels, and for this reason they opposed Gabirol’s system in its entirety. The matter reached the point that R. Moses Almosnino of Salonica (~1510-1580) tells in his book *Strength of Power* that he heard that R. Solomon Ibn Gabirol recanted his view concerning the angels that had aroused tremendous opposition.  But here above all Gabirol was true to the spirit of Jewish monotheism: God alone is completely devoid of matter, absolutely purely spiritual (and the will is just one of God’s qualities in action). All others – even angels – have some matter about them, though it be the finest of the fine, so that one cannot discern it but only conjecture its existence.

The illumination from the will pervades all beings in varying degrees. “Matter receives light and radiance from what is in the nature of the will” and its light-rays penetrate through the first level of beings – universal matter and universal form – to the second level, communicating light to it and producing the *universal intellect*. It is as remote from individual human intellect as universal matter is remote from ordinary individual matter. “Universal intellect knows its own nature” and it knows universal matter and universal form though it is composed from them. We learn this from individual human reason, which knows everything and penetrates everything although it is just a part of the whole. “The form of intellect knows itself, and therefore it knows the other forms outside itself.” By knowing its own nature the intellect knows all other beings, for they all contain what it contains, and it is the light that illuminates them. If the intellect encompasses all beings, “they necessarily subsist in it, and it includes them.” Thus “the forms of all beings are the forms of its being.” The universal intellect, though it is a simple substance, and despite its spirituality, is also composed of matter and form: “since the individual intellect is composed of matter and form, it follows that the universal intellect must be composed of matter and form.”

Universal intellect comprehends everything, as we said; but material beings are not found in the intellect, though it is possessed of the finest matter. It apprehends material things only through sense, which is “intermediate between the spirituality of intellect and the corporeality of matter.” This is explained more precisely as follows: The difference between matter and form is like the difference between a body and its color, and the intellect that distinguishes between matter and form and apprehends the form in itself is analogous to sense that distinguishes between color and body and apprehends the form of the color. In general, “the form of the intellect is the form of forms.” And Gabirol says in explanation: “It would not be possible that the form of intellect should know the forms of all things outside itself, were they not itself, and were it not universal with respect to all of them.”

We have here the great idea of Plotinus, that it is only possible to apprehend that which is potentially in the nature of the perceiver originally, an idea that Goethe (another pantheistic poet-philosopher) expressed aptly in the lines:

Wär’ nicht das Auge sonnenhaft –

---

60 See Munk, *Mélanges* p. 304.)
61 FL 5:31.
62 FL 5:1.
63 FL 5:2.
64 FL 2:3 and see 5:14.
65 FL 4:4.
66 FL 5:15.
67 FL 5:3.
68 FL 5:18.
69 FL 5:5.
Die Sonne könnt' es nie erblicken.

(Were the eye not sunny, 
It could never see the sun.)

The same applies to will and intellect. If the will has transmitted its light to the intellect, then the intellect contains what is in the will. Therefore universal intellect is the first differentiation of the will.  

The third level of being and the second refraction of the will is the universal soul (which again must not be confused with the individual human soul). The universal soul can apprehend forms on its own, like the universal intellect, which indeed is possessed of more perfect simplicity and spirituality than the soul as the soul is one level lower than the intellect. The universal soul is capable of knowing on its own, and it is a foundation and substrate of the physical world:

“The universal soul supports the whole physical world. It conceives a representation and sees everything that is in it, just as our individual souls support our bodies and know, represent, and see everything that is in them.”

Similarly Gabirol explains the difference between the soul and the physical world by this apt analogy: “The relation between the sensible forms and the soul is truly the same as that between the book and its reader: when the reader perceives the letters, the soul is reminded of the significance of these letters and their true meaning.”

The universal soul is also composed of matter and spirit, like all the simple substances, of which it is one of the last. The universal soul comprises three souls: the vegetative soul, the animal soul, and the rational soul (a distinction that all medieval Jewish thinkers adopted from the Greek philosophers). In its rational part the universal soul is attached to the universal intellect, and in its vegetative part – to universal nature.

Nature is the fourth and last rung in the ladder of simple substances. But nature as a simple substance is not yet nature in the ordinary sense. Universal nature stands in the middle between universal soul and the substance that supports the nine categories. While we can ask of the Prime Creator (and similarly of the will that is its attribute) only does it exist, and of universal intellect what is it, and of the universal soul how is it, we can additionally ask of nature why is it. Thus universal nature has the four predicates of existence, whatness (quiddity, essence), howness (quality), and whyness (queritas, its reason-for-being).

The form of universal nature comes from the form of universal soul, and from it comes the form of the substance that supports the nine categories. “Nature impresses and informs images on substance” and “whenever it impresses and informs any configuration on any substance, this configuration has some existence in the impressing agent.” Therefore we must conclude that “the images and signs that subsist in the substance have some existence in nature itself.” This idea contains something of what Kant taught centuries later. It is self-evident that universal nature, like all the simple substances, is possessed of matter and form, inasmuch as the physical substances proceed from it, while universal nature itself still stands on the borderline of the simple substances. One should thus see universal nature as corresponding to Spinoza’s natura naturans, while ordinary particular nature is his natura naturata. But whereas in Spinoza’s system nature in both these aspects is identical

---

70 See FL 5:17. (“differentiation”= hitgavvenut, variegation, branching out into colors as white light does when it passes through a prism. – LL)
71 FL 3:28, 38, 40.
72 FL 3:38.
73 FL 3:57-58.
74 FL 2:6.
75 FL 5:24.
76 FL 2:12.
with God (\textit{deus sive natura}), this is not so in Gabirol’s system, who remains a monotheist even in
his pantheism (or more precisely, who is the \textit{Jewish pantheist}.)\footnote{Or \textit{panentheist} (LL). See Munk, \textit{Mélanges} pp. 228-9 for the differences between Gabirol, Aristotle and Spinoza.}

Universal nature, the last of the simple substances, is the boundary between the spiritual
world and the sensory world. From it proceeds the physical world, which also has levels from the
simple to the complex. In it are combined time, space, heaven, and the realm of the celestial
spheres, and finally there devolves our terrestrial world, the world of generation and mortality.
The first of the substances on which the material world is based is the \textit{substance of the nine
categories},\footnote{Based on Aristotle’s ten categories: “what a thing is, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time,
Position, State, Activity, Passivity.” (Aristotle, \textit{Topics} I,9 from Ackrill, \textit{A New Aristotle Reader}, p. 67. –
LL)} which is still considered “the first of the intelligible substances” of the material
world. It is created but does not create, for below it “there is no substance that could receive its
action.” And even \textit{quantity} – the second of Aristotle’s ten categories – inhibits its motion because
“it annuls it and absorbs it.” This substance becomes grosser – “in this it is like a flame that dims
if moisture penetrated to it, for it deprives it of volatility; or like a cloudy sky that the light cannot
penetrate.” It becomes gross and corporeal for a second reason, because “its substance is too far
from the source and root of motion.”\footnote{FL 2:9-10.} Composite bodies that occupy successive levels below the
substance of the categories become progressively grosser and more corporeal in proportion to
their distance from the source, level by level, until one arrives at the lowest of the low. But even
these have a glimmer of potency from the Prime Creator of the highest substance, the First
Existent, may He be exalted and sanctified, by way of His first emanation – the will – and by way
of the whole progression of unfolding from universal matter and form that comes by Him and
from Him, for “the power of the highest is in the lowest” and it is possible to ascend from the
lowest to the very highest.

Thus did Solomon Ibn Gabirol fashion an exquisite method of general philosophy that
had no equivalent in Jewish or general thought. It certainly contains elements that were borrowed
from \textit{Sefer Yetzirah}, from the Midrash of Rabbi Eliezer, and from other early Jewish mystical
philosophical works, only some of which can we date precisely. Surely, too, Ibn Gabirol was
directly or indirectly influenced by Plato, Philo, Plotinus, and the Brethren of Purity, and almost
certainly by pseudo-Empedocles, as R. Shem Tov Falaquera states in his introduction to his
excerpts. But where is the philosopher who is entirely original, so that one cannot find a portion
of his views among his predecessors? Philo was indebted to Plato, while Spinoza was indebted
to Descartes and Maimonides. Some tried to find another prior philosopher who accorded the
same central place to the will as Ibn Gabirol, but failed (unless one equates Gabirol’s will with
Philo’s \textit{Logos}). There are many ideas for which one can find faint parallels in Plotinus and the
Brethren of Purity, but they are surely original with Gabirol, and have a coincidental similarity
with the other because of the common general direction of Gabirol’s thought with the neo-
Platonic systems. Therefore we have full license to judge, despite the borrowed elements in the
\textit{Fountain of Life}, that Solomon Ibn gabirol was the most original of the medieval philosophers,
whether Jewish or non-Jewish. He was the only philosopher in the Middle Ages who created a
universal humanistic philosophical method that was new and original, whereas other thinkers who
surpassed him greatly in their breadth of conception and variety of philosophical topics – such as
Saadia, Ibn Daud, Halevi, Maimonides and Gersonides – were primarily creators of religious-
philosophical methods with specifically Jewish application, based on general philosophical
methods (mostly Aristotelian). If we add to Ibn Gabirol’s philosopher’s crown that of the great

\footnote{FL 2:9-10.}
poet, there stands before us in full stature one of the intellectual giants and geniuses who is born once in a millennium. If nevertheless Ibn Gabirol and his *Fountain of Life* did not take their deserved place in the legacy of Jewish literature, this may be attributed to several factors — some of which I enumerated above, but also including the peculiar shape of the book, as well as the idiosyncracies of its author.

Ibn Gabirol’s bipolar personality is abundantly manifest in the *Fountain of Life*. On the one hand the book is a paradigm of intellectual aridity, full of abstract syllogisms in which one can see nothing but logical formalism. On the other hand, it contains a wealth of imaginative analogies and metaphors that reveal without a doubt the great poet. This poet is drunk with light, as well as being no less God-intoxicated than Spinoza. Nearly all the parables and analogies in his book revolve around light and the sun. And how exalted is the fundamental assumption of the book! — that the purpose of human existence is “cleaving of one’s soul to the higher world,” by means of which one “becomes attached to his like” — to this supernal world. It is possible to arrive at this “with the help of knowledge and action, for through both of them (and not by knowledge alone, but also by action) the soul becomes attached to the higher world. Knowledge brings about action, and action draws the soul away from its destructive contraries and restores it to its nature and its essence.” Thus, “knowledge and action liberate the soul from its bondage to nature and purify it from its barrenness and darkness, whereupon the soul returns to the supernal world.” How Jewish is the outlook that it is through action, not just knowledge, that one earns one’s portion in the supernal world! And how exalted and poetic is this outlook!

How is it possible to comprehend all these profound matters, that rise from this lowliest of worlds to the supreme heights of the Prime Existent? To this question, the Master answers: “Your very being contains everything that you know about existence, and similarly everything that you know is set in your frame in some manner.” To which the student responds enthusiastically: “Don’t I see that I encompass the world and its fullness, and comprehend them at an instant? How could I accomplish this, were not the essence of the soul fine yet strong, penetrating all and embracing all?”

And yet the true understanding comes through mystical union — Plotinus’s *ecstasy*, Philo’s “sober intoxication,” in which human self-knowledge mingles with the supernal light, which flows from the divine will into the person’s soul. Here is how the master and the disciple speak of that experience in another place, where the master instructs his student concerning the way to higher knowledge:

And in general, if you wish to depict these things, and the way in which your being spreads through them and encompasses them, you must ascend with your mind to the highest of the intelligibles, to cleanse and purify your intellect from all the pollution of sensory things, to release it from the bondage of the natural, and to arrive by the power of your intellect to the farthest boundary of what it is possible for you to comprehend of the truth of the intelligible substance, until you divest yourself of the sensory substance, as if you do not know it at all. Then it will be as if you embrace the entire physical world within your being, and place it in a corner of your soul. When you do this, you will understand how small is sensory being in comparison with the greatness of the intelligible. Then the spiritual substances will be present as if to your sight as they really are, embracing you and transcending you. You will see your own being as if you are one with those beings. Sometimes you will think that you are only a part of them, because of

80 The metaphor of light is also basic to Plotinus’s whole notion of emanation, and therefore in some sense basic to the neo-Platonic outlook itself (see R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 61). (LL)

81 FL 1:2.

82 FL 1:8.
your connection with your physical body. But sometimes it will seem to you that you are the sum of all these beings, and that there is no separation between you and them, because of the unity between your essence and theirs, and the attachment of your form with theirs.

And the student replies:

I did what you commanded me. I ascended the levels of the intelligibles. I strolled in their beautiful orchard. I found the things of sense weak and imperfect in comparison with those of the intellect. I saw the whole physical world drifting among the intelligibles as a small boat at sea or a tiny bird against the sky.

To this the teacher says that if the student will rise to the first universal matter and will take shelter in its shadow, then he will see wonders that surpass all. He adds: “Aspire to this and strive for it, for this is the purpose for which the human soul was created, and this is the highest joy and happiness.”

The book ends with the following grand climax: The purpose of all existence is knowledge of the realm of the divine. The way to achieving it is through understanding the divine will. The fruit of this study is liberation from death and union with the source of life. What happiness could be greater than this – what joy more marvelous?

That such poetic passages could be found in a dry, scholastic work, whose equal in scholastic aridity is hard to find in the whole Middle Ages – indeed, this fusion of exalted poetry and dry philosophy was possible only in the unique, bipolar soul of Solomon Ibn Gabirol!

---

83 FL 3:56-57.

84 FL 5:43.
THE BOOK OF THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

OR

THE IDEA OF UNIVERSAL MATTER AND FORM

Divided into five books. First, preliminaries to the identification of universal matter and universal form and to the identification of matter and form in composite substances. Second, on the substance that supports the corporeity of the universe. Third, on the affirmation of elemental substances. Fourth, on the art of apprehending matter and form in elemental substances. Fifth, on universal matter and universal form.
Supreme Being = The One

Will

Universal Form -- Universal Matter

Universal Reason

Universal Soul

- Rational Soul
- Animal / Sensing Soul
- Vegetal / Vital Soul

Universal Nature

The Substance that Supports the Nine Categories

- The Celestial Spheres (celestial form & matter)
- The Terrestrial World (physical form & matter)
BOOK ONE

PRELIMINARIES TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF UNIVERSAL MATTER AND FORM AND TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF MATTER AND FORM IN COMPOUND SUBSTANCES

1 The validity of dialectic

The art of logic will provide the truth of anything at all. All things are either possible for man to know and are subject to human reason, or are beyond reason and impossible to know. The former must be either self-evident or not, and when not can be demonstrated by dialectic.\(^85\)

MASTER Now that by your nobility of character and your zeal for learning you have progressed to this point, you may now begin to ask questions about what has most impressed you in our inquiry. But in doing so, please approach the ultimate question of why man was created. And let the mode of discourse between us be question and answer according to the rule of proof.

DISCIPLE But how can we arrange the questions to be proposed and the answers according to the rules of proof without great deliberation and forethought? Surely if we are determined to observe such rules in every proposition that arises in the course of our discussion, our work will be unduly prolonged and its difficulty increased.

MASTER You are right. However, let us propose proofs and premises at random in connection with this inquiry of ours, until such time as we can put them into sequence in conformity with logical patterns after determining their limits, their nature and everything connected with them.

If, however, it should happen that we set forth some question in the pattern of a dialectical figure, let us do so without reference to the order of terms in the propositions, for in such case the deliberation would go astray from the very beginning.

---

\(^{85}\) The chapter summaries are by Alfred Jacob except where as noted. Key philosophical terms have been revised to the 2005 standard as discussed in the first Preface.
DISCIPLE    You have long been aware of my eagerness for skill in dialectic and my longing to achieve it; but since I find that my mind is full of problems I am afraid that logical demonstration may not suffice for me to grasp the truth of all of them.

MASTER     Take care not to suppose that there can be any problem for which logical demonstration will fail to provide the answer, once you have given the art of logic its due. You should not rush into sudden judgments of things.

DISCIPLE    If you will confirm that for me by proof, I shall be greatly reassured.

MASTER     You must classify matters in two ways. Some of them are possible for man\(^{86}\) to know because they are subject to human reason while others defeat man’s knowing because they transcend his reason. Those that man can know are either self-evident or not. There is no need to adduce proofs for what is self-evident, but what is not will indeed be understood only through proof in accordance with painstaking observation of its rules, which are the rules of the dialectic art that will bring out the truth of the matter perfectly.

2 The goal of life

The goal of human life is knowledge, both of self and of all things. All life was created by the reasoned purpose [= “Will”] of the Divine; hence all quiescence and all activity derive from that divine will and lead to the restoration of man’s vital principle [= “soul”] to the higher world through its conscious release from materiality by knowledge and action.

DISCIPLE    Your words have reassured and encouraged me in the science of proof. Now because of the confidence inspired by your friendly disposition, I wish to question you on some matters that seem to be of greatest import.

MASTER     Ask whatever you wish, for to you I shall indeed be kindly disposed.

DISCIPLE    What is it, then, that man should seek in this life?

\(^{86}\) “Man” = \textit{homo} (= “human”), and similarly throughout. The Latin is gender-neutral. Jacob’s rendering is retained in the interests of keeping the already-daunting complexity within bounds – my apologies! (LL)
MASTER [Falaquera 1.1] Since to know is the most excellent of all the functions of man, what he most of all needs to seek is knowledge; and the most necessary knowledge is to know himself so that in the light of this he can understand all that exists apart from himself; for his nature encompasses and permeates all things and all are subject to his supremacy. He should also pursue knowledge of the final cause or purpose for which he was formed, so that he may vigorously apply himself to it and thus achieve happiness.

DISCIPLE Does humanity have such a reason for being?

MASTER Of course, since all things are responsive to the will of the supreme One.

DISCIPLE Please explain what you mean.

MASTER [F 1.2] Will is a divinely inspired potency that creates and activates all things, without which nothing can be created.

DISCIPLE How can that be?

MASTER It follows that rest and activity in the human race and everything else are from a compelling will.

DISCIPLE What then is the end and aim of the human race?

MASTER The union of its soul with the higher world, so that each one may return to its counterpart.

DISCIPLE How do we accomplish that?

MASTER By knowledge and diligence, because it is through them that the soul is united with the higher life. Knowledge leads to action, and it is such activity that releases the soul from the contraries that injure it and restores it to its true nature and substance. All in all, knowledge and activity free the soul from the bonds of materiality, cleanse it of darkness and obscurity, and enable it to return to its own higher realm.

---

87 Passages of the *Fons Vitae* that were selected by Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera in his late-medieval Hebrew epitome of the work have been marked in bold, with the paragraph-numbering of that work indicated in brackets. These selections are a good guide to the essential ideas of the entire work. (See “Preface: Note on Falaquera’s Epitome.” – LL)
### 3 The development of man’s knowledge.

*The perfection of the knowing self lies in its realization of its innate potentiality for the attainment of knowledge, and it is endowed with the appropriate instruments to this end.*

**DISCIPLE** What is the proof that the end and aim of the creation of mankind is knowledge and activity?

**MASTER** Proof of it is implicit in his definition.

**DISCIPLE** Please make this clearer for me.

**MASTER** Do you agree that whatever is potentially perfect and whose perfection is capable of realization has as the necessary purpose of its being the accomplishment of this?

**DISCIPLE** I cannot deny it.

**MASTER** Do you grant that the perfection of the knowing self lies in its knowledge, while on the other hand ignorance is its imperfection, and from its beginning in this world it evolves from ignorance to knowledge and so from potentiality to actuality?

**DISCIPLE** I do indeed.

**MASTER** Now since the perfection of the knowing self lies in its development from potentiality to actuality, and whatever is potentially perfect and capable of accomplishing this has necessarily as its purpose the completion of this end, what follows?

**DISCIPLE** It follows that the end and aim of the creation of man is for his conscious knowing to develop from potentiality to actuality.

**MASTER** And so you have now been shown that the purpose of the creation of mankind is knowledge.

**DISCIPLE** Yes, in this way it is clear. But please also show it in some other way, and establish a general rule.

**MASTER** Consider the nature of the soul and its form by which it is distinguished from all others. Notice also the transformation of the elements into existents, of existents into each other, and the formation of instruments for the knowing self, or the senses. In each of these the potencies of the knowing self are both manifest and unmanifest (*occultas*). From all of this you will derive the relevant proofs.
4 The possibility of knowing the primary Existent

Man was created to know all things, and especially the primary Existent that sustains and moves him. Such knowledge is possible through its created works and not otherwise.

DISCIPLE It is clear to me from what you have explained that the end and aim of man’s creation is knowledge. But I think we should look into the continuity of the soul itself. What does the knowledge that it gains bring about in it? Which forms of knowledge remain with it after its separation from the body and which do not? But these questions do not belong to our present pursuit; and indeed I have already touched on them in studying the soul. [F 1.5] Now, however, I must ask what that knowledge is for the sake of which man was created.

MASTER It is knowledge of all things in accordance with their nature, and above all of the primary Existent that sustains and actuates mankind.

DISCIPLE Is there a way to achieve that knowledge?

MASTER It is not impossible, nor yet altogether possible.

DISCIPLE What, then, is possible in this case, and what impossible?

MASTER What is impossible is to know the nature of the primary Existent apart from the creatures It has brought into being; while what is possible is to know it but only in the light of Its created works.

5 The nature of universal being

Direct knowledge the primary Existent is impossible because It is illimitable. To ascertain Its existence we must first examine universal being, which we find to be manifold and yet reducible to two, universal matter and universal form, which precede all other things and are irreducible.

DISCIPLE Why is knowledge of the primary Existent impossible?

MASTER Because It is above and beyond all things and is illimitable.

DISCIPLE In that case how can the knowing self of man understand reason, which is also above and beyond itself?
Because reason resembles the knowing self and they border on each other, thus making such knowing possible. The primary Existent however, has no correspondence with the knowing self nor anything in common with it nor any connection with any of the compound nor simplex substances. Indeed it is as impossible for an elemental substance to know the primary Existent as for a compound to know an elemental one.

Why is the primary Existent impossible to know on account of Its illimitability?

Because the knowledge of any knower requires him to encompass what is known, and the illimitable cannot be encompassed by knowledge.

How, then, can we find any way to ascertain whether the primary Existent exists?

Let us first examine the nature of universal being and whatever attributes can appertain to it; then motion, and finally the [divine] will that controls and sustains all things.

Is the nature of universal being single or multiple?

Multiple indeed. But manifold and varied as it is, nevertheless it narrows down to two by which it is sustained and endowed with existence.

Which two are those?

Universal matter and universal form.

But how can the whole of existence be narrowed down to just these two?

It is because these two are the root and ground of all and it is through these that whatever has being has been created.

How did these two come to be the source of everything that exists?

These by their very nature precede all things, and all can indeed be reduced to them.

How can they be?
MASTER   Because primary universal matter is more elemental \([\text{simplex}]\) than any other and is the ultimate of all matter; while universal form is more elemental than any other and unites all form. 

6  **A single substance but a dual foundation of being**

_There must be a single universal substance that endows all others with the concept of substantiality even though what is generated from it is based on duality._

DISCIPLE   The reduction of everything to these two, is it actual or is it conjecture?

MASTER   It is not a fact but an estimation.

DISCIPLE   I must first decide whether all diversity is to be reduced to a single root or to two that include everything before I can accept one as matter and the other as form.

MASTER   Are you now certain that you understand what substance is and what accident is?

DISCIPLE   I am.

MASTER   If, then, all substances coincide in being substances, there must exist a substance common to them all that unites them with each other and endows them all equally with the concept of substantiality.

DISCIPLE   How can that be asserted when I know that the substances are all different?

MASTER   Each one in its own true being does not differ from the others.

DISCIPLE   What is the proof of that?

MASTER   If they were diversified in their existence as substance, they could not all be substance.

DISCIPLE   Why not?

MASTER   Because substantiality is an attribute of existence. Substantiality in itself however is not manifold. Therefore existence cannot be diversified in that in which it is not diverse.

DISCIPLE   That is true.

MASTER   Therefore it is not impossible for total diversity to revert to the two root fundamentals that would be appropriate for them.
DISCIPLE  You are right. But why is the ground of all diversity not said to be one?

MASTER  If the root and ground of all things were one only, they themselves being diverse, there would have to be a heterogeneous nature in that which includes them; moreover, even if the basis of all were one, there would nevertheless be a need for this basis to revert to duality.

DISCIPLE  How so?

MASTER  If indeed it is one, it must have some property that differs from itself.

DISCIPLE  Why?

MASTER  Because everything generated from it is marked by properties that differ from it; therefore it must itself be marked by some property that is not itself.

DISCIPLE  I am now convinced that everything must revert to the two fundamentals. But what proof is there that one of them is universal matter and the other universal form?

MASTER  Since you have granted the existence of the two fundamentals to which all things revert, you must in consequence admit that one of them supports, while the other one is supported.

7 The three divisions of philosophy

Philosophy comprises the science of matter and form, of will and of the primary Existent. As exemplified in a human being, there is his physical substantiality or body with the orderly arrangement of its members, which is matter and form; the soul, which is like will; and the reason, which is like the primary Existent.

DISCIPLE  This is enough for me. But since these two are the bases of all existents, we must certainly apply ourselves to examining them.

MASTER  To do so is both useful and necessary for understanding will and the primary Existent.

DISCIPLE  Is there some other science other than that of matter and form and that of the primary Existent?
The whole of philosophy is divided into three parts, or the science of matter and form, the science of will and the science of the primary Existent.

Why is all philosophy in three parts?

Because these three alone exist: matter-and-form, the primary Existent, and the will as mean between the extremes.

Why do these three alone exist?

This is why: anything created requires a cause and some intermediary between. Now the cause is the primary Existent; what has been created is matter and form; and the intermediary is will.

Please give me an example of their interconnection with each other and their order of being.

An example of matter and form is as it were the body of a human being and its form – taking as form the composite of bodily members. For will take the soul, and for the primary Existent reason.

Which of these studies takes precedence?

In the way of instruction, the study of matter and form takes precedence over that of will and of the primary Existent; but in the way of existence the opposite is the case.

Is it your view that after these, no other study remains for us to explore?

None, because these are the foundations and roots of wisdom; its branches, however, are numerous.

Is any one of these a branch of another one?

Matter and form are branches of will. Beyond this nothing can be said until you master the science of matter-and-form and that of will.
8 The nature of the soul

The soul is lofty, discriminating, pervading all and perceiving all. It pursues and comprehends all things by its potencies that permeate all.

(The Master continues) In view of this, I suggest that you first study the science of matter and form, because this first division of philosophy is prior to the two subsequent ones.

DISCIPLE Please help me to acquire a true understanding of universal matter and universal form.

MASTER [F 1.4] Of all things what is most excellent and useful to begin to explore once the science of proof has been mastered is this: to contemplate the nature, potencies and accidents\(^{88}\) of the soul and of whatever accords with and is associated with it, since this principle is capable of being known and itself can reach and comprehend all things by its all-pervading powers. If you have already considered this, well and good; if not, let it be the beginning of your exploration.

DISCIPLE I have most certainly applied myself for a long time past to understanding the soul and to a detailed investigation of it and have thereby achieved a degree of knowledge by which I have recognized its loftiness, its enduringness and its accuracy in comprehending all things to such a degree that when I observe it sustaining all I wonder how this can possibly be so.

MASTER Now consider whether your own nature encompasses all you know about existing things, and in addition whether those things you know are in any way rooted within your being.

DISCIPLE How could I not be aware of this when I see myself encircling and encompassing the whole universe quicker than a wink? This I could not have done if the nature of my soul were not keenly perceptive and strong, penetrating and perceiving all.

MASTER If you have now achieved true knowledge of the soul’s nature and have realized that it embraces all things, begin now to separate what exists into parts and resolve those that are compounds into their irreducible elements, which are, of course, matter and form.

---

\(^{88}\) “Accidents” (rendered “contingencies” by Jacob) in the classical Aristotelian tradition refers to any of those variable properties of an entity not strictly implied by its definition (for instance, a human individual’s hair-color, height, or emotional disposition).
The fivefold distribution of the present work

What is composed of matter and form is twofold: (a) compound physical substance, and (b) elemental spiritual (= transcending) substance. Physical substance is twofold: (a) physical matter supporting the form of the qualities, and (b) transcending matter supporting physical form. This will require two books: (a) preliminaries to the identification of universal matter and form; matter and form in the sensa; discussion of the physical matter that supports the qualities, and (b) the transcending matter that supports physical form.

But since transcending ("spiritual") substance requires proofs of its existence, a third book will discuss the elemental substances. A fourth will examine the matter and form of the elemental substances. And a fifth will survey universal matter and universal form in themselves.

DISCIPLE I have already learned all I could about the soul, although without completing what I ought to know. Nevertheless let us begin now to examine universal matter and form. I hope that you will begin by listing the headings that we should explore in this present inquiry and divide their sections reasonably so that I may have everything in readiness.

MASTER Since our purpose has been to explore universal matter and universal form, we ought to state that what is made up of them is twofold: one is compound physical substance and the other is elemental spiritual substance. Physical substance also divides into two: one is the physical matter that carries the form of the qualities, and the other is the spiritual matter that carries physical form.

This is why there must be two treatises for us to consider. The first is on the preliminaries to the determination of universal matter and form, examining what is known of the sense-perceptibles and discussing the physical matter that carries the qualities. The second is addressed to the spiritual matter that carries physical form.

Once the argument in these four treatises is complete, we shall then have to examine universal matter and form in themselves; hence there will be a fifth treatise to that end. And so it is that the whole of what we should consider with reference to matter and form will be found in these five treatises that we have specified. Such, then, is the whole content of the present work.

89 “Spiritual matter” – materia spiritualis, also called “intelligible matter.” Gabirol’s bridging the material-spiritual dichotomy is deliberate and systematic, though not unprecedented within the neo-Platonic tradition.
10 The properties of universal matter

Universal matter and form are to be understood in both a general and an individual way. The former will be in terms of inherent properties, which if they exist will show that the entity to which they appertain exists. For instance, if a universal matter exists, it must have the following properties: (a) self-existence, (b) a single true being, (c) support of diversity, (d) provision to all things of its own nature and identity.

DISCIPLE How well you have planned the treatises on the exploration of matter and form! Let us, therefore, undertake the inquiry into them that we proposed.

MASTER The existence of universal matter and universal form is not to be ascertained in one way only.

DISCIPLE Please reveal to me what ways you have in mind.

MASTER As a first intent their existence can be known in two ways, one of them universal or general and the other particular or individual.

DISCIPLE How can the existence of matter and form be known in the universal way?

MASTER Anything under investigation that we seek to identify by proofs should be examined in the light of its inseparable properties. When these properties are known to exist and to be what they are, then that reality to which they belong will also be known to exist.

DISCIPLE Please illustrate what you are saying about such an investigation.

MASTER [F 1.6] If there is only one universal matter for everything, the following properties belong to it; self-existence, singleness of nature, sustainment of diversity and bestowal on all things of its own nature and identity.
DISCIPLE    What proof is there that these properties belong to and are appropriate to universal matter?

MASTER     It must possess them if it has existence.

DISCIPLE    How is that?

MASTER     The matter must exist, because what does not exist cannot be the matter of what does. It is said to be self-existing so that reasoning will not regress to infinity (as it would do) if matter were not self-existing. Its true being is a unity because what we require is a single matter for all things. It sustains multiplicity, since diversity depends on forms and forms are not self-existent. It bestows its own nature and identity on all things, because if it sustains all things it is necessarily present in all, and being in all it must bestow its own nature and identity on all.

11 The chain of discovery of the unmanifest ultimate

The search for the primary matter is by a rational reduction, eliminating all forms until the very last. This can be done, for example, by eliminating from the celestial sphere color, shape, corporeity, body and the spiritual concepts until a self-emergent created entity is reached which stands alone and supports all these forms. The disciple does this but fails to find any universal matter supporting all and differing from all.

DISCIPLE    It’s quite evident that universal matter must have these properties.

MASTER     Seek them, then, in all existents, and if you discover them there, you have then surely discovered the primary matter.

DISCIPLE    How am I to make this search?

MASTER     By a rational reduction, separating each form of a given existent from the others and proceeding from manifest to unmanifest until you come to that form beyond which no other lies. This is the form that antecedes all others of that which sustains it.

DISCIPLE    Please give an example.

MASTER     A good example is the celestial sphere, of whose forms the first to occur is color, then shape, then corporeity, then body, then the remaining ones, which is to say the spiritual concepts, until you reach that of a single self-existent created entity sustaining all these forms.
You will thereupon find it described by the above properties, and you will discover that it is the unmanifest ultimate beyond which no limit exists except one, and that is the Creator whose name is the Most High.

**DISCIPLE** I have now abstracted the forms of that which exists from each other and have proceeded from manifest to unmanifest until I reached the invisible limit beyond which there is no other, exactly as you said.

**MASTER** Now once again withdraw from that invisible limit back to the manifest and from the manifest to another more manifest until you reach the point where you began, and you will find the properties of that unmanifest limit accompanying and attending you from the unmanifest to the manifest.

**DISCIPLE** I have now sought these properties in existing things and have found these things to be permeated and pervaded throughout, until I reached the irreducible indivisible. But I failed to find any necessity for the existence of a universal matter supporting everything yet differing from everything.

**MASTER** Did you not grant that one of the properties of universal matter is that it endows all things with its own substance and identity? Where, then, will existing things acquire these properties if there is no universal matter to provide them?

### 12 Diversity arises from form, not from matter

*What makes diversity possible is form, whether manifest or unmanifest; but what accepts the forms is homogeneous and without diversity. This is illustrated by golden bracelets or necklaces with varied form but identical matter.*

**DISCIPLE** It is as you say. But in what way will this matter differ from existing things?

**MASTER** The true being of matter cannot differ from that of existing things. However, these are made different from matter by the forms it acquires, or in other words by the differentiae that distinguish it.
Accordingly the variety present in manifest existents comes from manifest forms and similarly the variety in unmanifest existents comes from unmanifest forms. Therefore diversity occurs by reason of the forms of existing things; but the invisible reality that receives the forms is undiversified primary universal matter.

**DISCIPLE** Please provide an illustration.

**MASTER** Consider some golden bracelets or some necklaces wrought in gold and let them represent the existents. Now if you find them to be of differing forms and yet their fundamental matter to be one and the same, with no difference between the true being of that matter and their own, you will realize thereby that existents are diverse as to form but their fundamental matter is one, and its true being is no other than their own.

**13 The properties of universal form**

These are (a) to subsist in another, (b) to bring it to completion, and (c) to endow it with existence. Indispensable to form is to be supported; and without form nothing truly has existence or completion. But does not matter exist? Not except as transcending form is brought to it. Although it may be spoken of as existing, it lacks any but potential existence.

**DISCIPLE** You have truly helped me to discover universal matter, since I have found its properties in existing things. Now please also help me to discover universal form in the same way.

**MASTER** In the same way, then, take note of the properties of universal form, which are: (a) to subsist in another, (b) to perfect the true being of that in which it inheres, and (c) endow it with existence. If you find these properties in the forms of existing things, you have indeed discovered universal form.

**DISCIPLE** What reasoning can you bring forward (to show) that these properties are attached to universal form?

**MASTER** Indispensable to form is that it is supported, since if not supported it will support. In that case form will be matter and will have the concept of matter. But to perfect the true being in which it inheres and endow it with existence is also a function of form, since no entity can be what it is without form.
DISCIPLE  But did we not previously state that matter also exists?

MASTER  [F 1.8] We asserted that matter had existence only when spiritual form was conferred on it; but in itself it lacks the existence that it gains when form is joined with it, which is actual existence. Otherwise when we say it exists, such existence is merely potential.

DISCIPLE  I have now sought out these properties and found that they accompany all forms of existents. But on what basis can I claim the existence of a universal form from which the being and perfection of all forms arises?

14 Universal matter and form taken together

Universal matter and form are also found in particular entities such as animals, plants and inanimates, as well as in particular artifacts such as statues or beds.

The same is the case with the universals of nature, which are the four elements. Each differs from the others in form, and so a single common or general form must exist for them. This is necessary because they are accidental and not self-emergent; and so their relation to what supports them is the same as with particular forms.

The four elements are not observable in themselves, but can be deduced from observation of animals; and the same is true of other forms. In the case of the qualities, they do not lend themselves to intermixture, and so something else must hold them together. Similarly, a substratum is required for generation to take place.

MASTER  Please reserve that subject for now and do not plunge ahead so quickly, since the resolution of it will follow in due course.

DISCIPLE  Well, then, please now expound the existence of universal matter and form together in the individual or particular way you mentioned earlier, since it is now clear to me in the general or universal one.
MASTER Contemplate the natural sensibles, whether universal or particular, and you will discover in them nothing other than these.

DISCIPLE What is an example from among the particulars?

MASTER Animals, plants and inanimates are each composed of matter and form.

DISCIPLE That is so.

MASTER Observe individual artifacts too, such as a statue or a bed.

DISCIPLE I have done so, and again found the same.

MASTER And the same is also the case in the universals of nature, which are the four elements.

DISCIPLE How is that?

MASTER Do you not perceive that the form of each element is not that of another, and hence there must exist one form that is common to them all?

DISCIPLE What is this necessity that compels me to admit the existence of something beyond these sensible forms that is common to them all?

MASTER It must be admitted for the following reason: these forms are accidental, not intrinsic. Consequently they bear the same relation to what supports them as do particular forms to what supports them.

DISCIPLE I quite understand the substrata of particular forms, such as the humors in animals and the elements in plants and stones, and that these can be reduced into them; but I have not found any substratum for universal forms. How, then am I to agree that there is such a substrate here as I did there?

MASTER Well, did you observe the four elements themselves in the animals, plants and stones?

DISCIPLE No, but I saw the animals and then resolved them.

MASTER Even so will you also see these universal forms reduced to their substrata; and the conclusion will inevitably be that their substratum is a unity.
DISCIPLE  Now I understand. But please explain further.

MASTER  The incompatibility of the qualities is evidence of this.

DISCIPLE  How is that?

MASTER  The qualities do not lend themselves to intermixture nor combination. Something else must therefore exist that is other than them, and joins them and holds them together. I do not here mean a joining together as an action nor a holding as an effort, but rather a joining and retention in place, since activity appertains to some instrumentality in the substratum, not to the substratum itself.

DISCIPLE  I understand. But please add something further.

MASTER  Do you agree that generation arises from contraries?

DISCIPLE  I do indeed.

MASTER  Understand, then, that if there were no substratum for the contraries, substance would derive from nonsubstance, and what is not substance would be prior to substance.

DISCIPLE  How can that be?

MASTER  Any element, which is a substance, comes into being from another element; similarly, the animals, plants and stones are substances and are produced from the elements. Now if there were no substratum in which generation could take place, and that from which generation arises is prior to that which is generated from it: then what I have just said necessarily follows.

DISCIPLE  Now I understand. But please explain a little more.

15  The primordial substratum

The relation of this substratum to the physical substance that supports the forms of the elements is the same as the relation of that body to these forms. In the chain of sequence, primary matter is the most unmanifest, and sense-known forms the most manifest.
MATTER AND FORM

MASTER  The elements certainly differ in their qualities and yet are alike in being body (corpus). This, then, must be their substratum.

DISCIPLE  It cannot be otherwise. If these elements are alike in corporeality as you said, there must be a body that underlies the forms of the elements. But what do you think it is like?

MASTER  That is something we shall discuss later when we analyze for ourselves this body and differentiate its property, which is quantity, from its substratum, which is substance. At that time you will appreciate that the relation between the substratum and the physical substance that supports the forms of the elements is the same as the relation between this body and those forms.

This consideration will reveal to you what lies behind the substance that is the substratum for the body of other substances that are themselves substrata and subsist in each other, until you reach the primordial substratum that is the universal matter at which we are aiming. Then you will recognize the similarities between these substrata and those mentioned earlier, or the substances that are intermediate between the totally unmanifest primary matter and the totally manifest tangible forms.

DISCIPLE  Let us go back to what we were saying about body as substratum for the forms of the elements.

16  The substratum for universal and for particular forms

Just as there is a single physical substance as substratum for the elements, so is there one for particular forms; and this is applicable also to the celestial sphere. Yet since matter never separates from form, it is difficult to demonstrate their difference.

MASTER  Are you now convinced that the elements with their different forms, which are the four (primary) qualities, coincide with respect to physical substance? And is it clear to you that there is only one physical substance as substratum for the four forms?
DISCIPLE Yes, that is clear.

MASTER These universal forms in the elements, then, will bear the same relation to what is generated out of them as do particular forms to what is generated out of them.

DISCIPLE That must be so.

MASTER Similarly, the physical substance that is the substratum for these universal forms will be just like the elements in being the substratum for these particular forms.

DISCIPLE That also must be so.

MASTER Now using this as a model, consider the other cases that come after.

DISCIPLE I think that you are suggesting this with reference to the celestial sphere, because it shares with the elements in corporeality, and so the same judgment must be made of it.

MASTER It cannot be otherwise.

DISCIPLE Indeed it cannot. But how can I assert that in something where form is never separate from matter, matter is different from form?

MASTER When you see subsisting in matter a similar but different form, you will realize by that fact the difference between form and matter, because if they were one they could not be differentiated from each other.

17 The difference between the substance of the celestial sphere and that of the elements; and summary

There are some differences and some similarities between the physical substance of the celestial sphere and that of natural objects: the celestial mass does not take on the qualities of the elements nor generation and dissolution; but it definitely is a physical substance because the properties and differentiae of body are evident in it.

The disciple has now learned the four kinds of matter and form: particular artificial matter, particular natural matter, universal natural matter that accepts generation, and celestial matter. In each of these matters is its supported form, and although different, all concur in the concept of matter and form. In natural sensibles, whether universal or particular, nothing but material form is present.
Forms agree in being forms of body. They are one, for instance, in species and yet many in individuals as separate instances of species. In sense-perceivables, universal matter must be present and also universal form.

(The Master continues) [F 1.9 according to Baeumker] In due course, however, we shall establish the true separateness of form and matter when we take up the substance that supports the nine categories.⁹⁰

DISCIPLE I know the ones you mean.

MASTER Therefore any form supported in the physical substance of the celestial sphere will be like the universal forms that subsist in the bodies of the elements,⁹¹ just as these were like the particular forms subsisting in what is constituted of the elements.

DISCIPLE That’s how it must be. [F 1.10] But why do you separate the substance of the celestial sphere from that of the four elements, since they share in quantity and therefore must be a single substance?

MASTER It is true of course that the celestial sphere and the elements are a single substance since both share in quantity, except for the fact that the difference between them rests on another basis; that the celestial mass does not receive the qualities of the four elements nor is it involved in generation and corruption. Furthermore, the form of the celestial sphere differs from those of the elements.

DISCIPLE How can we possibly assert that the celestial sphere and the elements constitute a single body even when the celestial mass is not subject to generation and dissolution while that of the elements is?

MASTER Exactly as we were able to state that the body of the elements is one even though they differ in their qualities.

DISCIPLE But how will you reply to some one who denies that the celestial sphere is a body?

---

⁹⁰“The substance that supports the nine categories” – i.e., common physical reality. Based on Aristotle’s ten categories: “What a thing is, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time, Position, State, Activity, Passivity.” The last nine of these categories pertain only to physical beings, not to spiritual entities. (Aristotle, Topics I, 9 from Ackrill, A New Aristotle Reader, p. 67.)

⁹¹“The elements” – referring to fire, air, earth and water.
MASTER      The body of the celestial sphere cannot be denied, because physical
properties and differentiae are evident in it. However, some one may deny that it is a
body of the same sort as that of these elements, and there is no need for you to dispute
that at present. Now please tell me what you have gained from our reasonings up to this
point.

DISCIPLE   [F 1.9 according to 1950 Hebrew edition] I have come to know
the four kinds of matter and the four of form.

MASTER      What are they?

DISCIPLE     Particular artificial matter, particular natural matter,
universal natural matter subject to generation, and celestial matter. And on the
other hand, in the case of each of these matters its form sustained within it.

MASTER      [F 1.10] Well learned! But now in addition you must
understand that these four kinds of matters and forms, although disparate, yet
share in the concept of matter and form.

DISCIPLE     That is true.

MASTER      And in what the senses can perceive, there is nothing else beside
these.

DISCIPLE     Nothing.

MASTER      So now we have ascertained that in universal and particular natural
sensibles matter and form alone exist.

DISCIPLE     Just so.

MASTER      Parts come together to form a whole, and these matters and forms
are parts. They should therefore unite and become a whole.

DISCIPLE     How can they unite when they are disparate?

MASTER      Do not the elements, although disparate, nevertheless coincide in
being body? And do not forms similarly coincide in being the form of body? And so
forms considered as a species -- that of sensible form -- are one, even if as individuals in
their singleness they are many.
They are indeed.

Therefore what must exist in sense-perceptibles is a universal matter, which is body; and a universal form, comprising everything supported in body.

That’s the way it must be.

Now that you have been convinced by this discussion in Book One that nothing is present in sense-perceptibles except matter, which is universal body, and form, which is everything supported therein; let us now take up in Book Two that which comes next after this sense-perceptible body, or the substance that supports quantity. This is the first of the rational substances that we shall consider.
1 The identification of primary universal matter

A nonperceptible matter must exist that supports the form of physical substance and is the primary matter that encompasses all things. This must be seen in the context of a general scheme of existents from highest to lowest, some supporting others, some being supported by others. Each higher is matter to the extent that it supports; each lower is form to the extent that it is supported. What is less dense is matter for what is more dense, which in turn constitutes form for what is less dense.

The existence of such a supporting physical substance is confirmed by language itself. The very word body points to a form and to something structured. Body is form for a self-emergent entity that constitutes its matter. This is a fifth matter, and “body” a fifth form.

DISCIPLE You promised that in this second book you would take up physical matter, the substance that comes next after the sense-perceptibles. Please do this, then, and explain it fully.

MASTER [Falaquera 2.1] Any scientific inquiry directed to understanding that physical matter exists as the substance that underlies the corporeity of the universe is to be carried out by considering the subjects already discussed. Now, since the universe is a physical existent, just as any body is an existent that is shaped, colored, and in general constituted by its forms as we have shown, “body” as such must necessarily be the matter of the forms it underlies such as shape, colors and the other accidental characteristics, and these the forms for it.
In like manner there must be some other that is the matter of corporeity and corporeity the form for it. The relation of this corporeity to the matter that supports it will therefore be the same as the relation of the universal form just mentioned as like shape and color to the corporeity that underlies it. Some imperceptible matter must therefore exist as substratum for the form of body.

I shall now provide for you a general model for acquiring an understanding of the matters and forms. Just visualize the existents in sequence, some of them supporting and some being supported by others. Constitute in them two extremes as it were, one lower and the other higher. Now the higher one that encompasses the whole like universal matter is matter to the extent that it supports, while the lower like perceptible form will be form to the extent it is supported. Moreover, of those that lie between the two extremes, the higher and more rarified will be matter for what is lower and denser, while the lower and denser will in turn be form for it.

In the light of this, the corporeity of the universe, which is the manifest matter that supports the form sustained in it, must (itself) be a form borne in the imperceptible matter that we spoke of, and in line with this consideration such a matter will be form for what is next, until we reach the primary matter that encompasses all.

DISCIPLE Please reveal whether a matter does exist that supports the corporeity of the universe.

MASTER [F 2.1] The very term “body” is an indication that a matter is known to exist that supports corporeity, because when you proclaim that something is a body you are assigning a form and something structured, exactly as when you assert that an object is colored or shaped you thereby specify something revealing and something being revealed; and when in explaining you state that “body” has length, breadth and thickness you are designating a reality that is long, wide and thick.

---

92 It would seem presumptuous to accuse the master-poet of mixing metaphors, but that is precisely what seems afoot here, with the “higher” entities said to “support” the lower. A modern scientific analogy might be the sequence “quarks – protons & electrons – atoms – molecules – cells – organs – animals – populations – biosphere,” a progression which similarly proceeds from the undifferentiated to the differentiated, with a corresponding increase of “form.” Each prior order of being “supports” the succeeding: physics supports chemistry, which supports biology, which supports ecology. By Gabirol’s convention, quarks are the “highest” of this series – the most abstract and conceptual, the least “material” – the common substrate of celestial and terrestrial entities, closest in temporal order and ontological hierarchy to God’s initial creative act, and to the merging-point of matter with energy – light! (LL)
DISCIPLE: I acknowledge that color and shape are separate from body, but not length and breadth.

MASTER: If you understand this purely with regard to color and shape, these are never separate from a physical form; but even if with regard to properties, you still have no cause for dissent.

DISCIPLE: How so?

MASTER: Because if these properties are removed, others are not.

DISCIPLE: It is clear to me now in that way. But is there not also some other way?

MASTER: Are you unaware that one and the same existent can support and be supported?

DISCIPLE: Of course not, since that is what we have stressed all along.

MASTER: Do you know that what supports and is self-existent is sense-perceptible like a physical mass, while what is rational is imperceptible like reason and the soul, both of which are insensible substances?

DISCIPLE: I will grant for now that there is an elemental substance, until you demonstrate it later.

MASTER: Do not a self-existent perceptible reality and an inherently insensible one agree in some way and yet differ in some other?

DISCIPLE: They do.

MASTER: In what do they agree, and in what differ?

DISCIPLE: They agree in that each is self-existent and they differ in that one is perceptible and the other imperceptible.

MASTER: Is body perceptible?

DISCIPLE: It is.

MASTER: Is it also self-existent?

DISCIPLE: Of course.

MASTER: Then is not “body” the form for a self-existent reality?

DISCIPLE: It is.
MASTER And so the self-existent reality must constitute the matter for body, and this latter its form, must they not?

DISCIPLE That is so.

MASTER Consequently, it is now evident that there is a self-existent reality that supports body, and that this is a substance.

DISCIPLE Yes, that is evident.

MASTER You have just discovered the fifth matter!  

DISCIPLE So I have!

MASTER In the same way you may take corporeity to be the fifth form.

DISCIPLE I have already done so.

MASTER Now, let us go back to the beginning. Enumerate for us the sequence of matters one by one.

2 The chain of sequence of matters and forms

The Disciple now summarizes what he has learned: that (a) particular natural matter subsists on (b) universal natural matter, which subsists in (c) universal celestial matter, which subsists in (d) universal spiritual matter; that the celestial sphere with everything in it subsists in spiritual substance which supports it; that (a) particular natural forms subsist in (b) universal natural form, which subsists in (c) universal celestial form, which subsists in (d) universal spiritual form; that (a) spiritual matter supports physical matter, which (b) supports celestial matter, which (c) supports natural universal matter, which (d) supports natural particular matter; that the same is true of form; that one matter supports all sensibles; that reason distinguishes between sensibles and the substance they are resolved into; and that rational entities are similarly distinguished by reason.

DISCIPLE Where shall I begin this?

MASTER Start with the sense-perceptibles.

---

93 “The fifth matter” – i.e., the fifth in the sequence of five kinds of matter enumerated in the next section. Jacob translates “the quintessence” – i.e., the rarified matter of the stars and celestial spheres that is the “fifth essence” and substrate for the four terrestrial elements (fire, air, earth, water). But the “quintessence” in this sense is the third matter – universal celestial matter, or possibly the fourth (universal physical matter).
DISCIPLE  [F 2.3] Up to now I have learned that particular natural matter subsists in universal natural matter, this in universal celestial matter, this in universal physical matter, and this in universal spiritual matter.

MASTER  You have learned well. But what follows?

DISCIPLE  It follows that the celestial sphere with everything in it subsists in spiritual substance and this is what sustains it.

MASTER  Now enumerate also the sequence of forms one by one, beginning as you did with the matters.

DISCIPLE  [F 2.4] Just as we said with the matters, here too we say that particular natural forms must subsist in universal natural form, this in universal celestial form, this in universal physical form, and this in universal spiritual form.

MASTER  Again let us go back and begin with the rational realm.

DISCIPLE  This inquiry has already found out that spiritual matter sustains physical matter, which supports celestial matter, which supports natural universal matter, which supports natural particular matter. The same must be said of form.

MASTER  You have understood well. But what follows from this teaching?

DISCIPLE  It follows that the matter supporting all sense-known realities such as quantity and the other accidents that ensue is a single matter subject to such accidents as are by, in, on, from, because of and toward it.

MASTER  What necessity required this matter to be single?

DISCIPLE  Because all sense-perceptibles can be reduced to it, inasmuch as these perceptibles are accidents and reason distinguishes them from substance and reduces them to it.

MASTER  On what basis did you conclude that just because sense-objects are reduced by reason into substance, they have one single universal matter as that substance?

DISCIPLE  Well, I have noted that when the senses observe the complexity of sensible realities even though compounded and combined, they still do not confuse one with another. This is why I judge that when reason perceives the separateness of rational realities even though conjoined and combined in their being it never confuses one of them with another. That is why I maintained that sense-objects are distinguishable from substance but can be reduced to it, since reason distinguishes between them, even though they exist together.
MASTER How, then, did you conclude that rational realities are necessarily separable in their existence even though conjoined and combined, since reason adjudged them separate?

3 The form of reason, and of the forms it apprehends

But how can rational entities be disassociated? They are not discrete as are the sense-perceptibles. Answer: for sense-perception forms are exterior, but for reason form subsists within itself, where the knowing self can recognize it at any time because of its kinship with reason. Reason, however, is not empowered to grasp what is superior in rank to itself unless it is rooted in and dependent on that. Cause can apprehend the caused, but the caused does not fully comprehend the cause. If reason does apprehend all substances, then it is necessarily superior to them, and must include them.

Whatever is purer and more ethereal is more perceptive than what is beneath it; and reason perceives and apprehends all things. Reason accepts the forms of all differing things, and these are necessarily the form of its true being; yet within reason necessarily they are discrete.

DISCIPLE If indeed I found myself ready to draw that conclusion, I nevertheless reflected afterward on the rationals in the light of the sensibles, as I have explained.

MASTER Is it not just as necessary for you to recognize that the rationals are separable from the point of view of reason, as to understand that the sensibles are discrete from the point of view of sense-perception?

DISCIPLE Please explain for me the basis of this, and set up some guiding principle for understanding the difference of things, what necessity decrees this, by virtue of which we seek to be prepared to disassociate existing things and divide one from another, especially the rational substances, since I realize the difficulty of understanding their separateness as long as they are connected and combined in their existence.

MASTER That is true. But I shall give you a principle that will make it easy, so pay close attention.

DISCIPLE You have my attention. Please begin.
If the substance of reason is cognizant of itself, the form of truth must reside within it. Reason thus recognizes this form unerringly, and since the form resides within itself, cognizance is immediate. Consequently the knowing self (= “soul”\(^\text{94}\)) recognizes the form of truth at any time, since it is so closely related to reason. In other words, the nature of the [rational?] soul is akin to and similar to reason. The animal [= sensing] soul, on the other hand, cannot grasp this form with full cognition but rather forms a seeming notion of it, because its own nature is far-removed from that of reason. It is like the sense of sight when remote from its object: it fails to grasp the form presented to its view.

Now if this is as we say, that reason in and of itself gains the form of truth, which resides within it, and this apprehension is true knowledge of things, then it must embrace and comprehend them. Consequently it cannot grasp what stands higher than itself in the scale.

We do not state this in an absolute sense, because reason does apprehend what ranks above it to the extent it is rooted in and dependent on that. This is apprehension of cause by what has been caused; but this is not apprehension and comprehension like that of cause for what has been caused. And indeed, if reason does understand all substances, it is necessarily superior to them.

Indeed it must be.

If reason is superior to all substances, it must include them; and if it includes them it must contain them and all must exist within it.

I now understand from this teaching that reason apprehends all things because it encompasses them. Is there in addition some other way to make it clear?

Whatever has a more rarified nature and a purer substance is a better perceiver and apprehender of realities. But reason perceives and apprehends everything better than anything beneath it. Therefore its nature must be more rarified and purer in essence than any and all inferiors.

\(^{94}\) “Knowing self” (= “soul”) – *substantia animae*. “Knowing self” (Jacob’s term) is probably as good a definition as has been given of “soul” in the sense that is continuous from Plato and Aristotle through the medieval philosophers such as Ibn Gabirol. As will be made clear later (III, 28, 38-42, 47-48), the soul in this tradition is regarded as comprising discrete faculties – knowing (rational), sensing (animal), and life-sustaining (vegetal). Depending on context, the Latin *anima* may refer at different times to one or another of these functions (which Gabirol refers to on occasion as the “three souls”). This is one source of ambiguity. Another is the ambiguity between the individual soul (sustaining an individual person or organism) and the “universal soul” – a transcendent being conceived by thinkers from Plotinus to Emerson to be the universal source and sustainer of these functions on the individual level. (LL)
DISCIPLE  This teaching makes clear that reason apprehends all things. Is there in addition some other explanation?

MASTER  Since reason’s knowledge of the forms of things depends on their union with it, and that union is because it accepts them, what follows?

DISCIPLE  It follows that reason has knowledge of the forms of things on account of the fact that it accepts them.

MASTER  Well, since reason knows all forms, and its knowledge of them depends on its receiving them, what then?

DISCIPLE  What follows is that reason knows the forms of things because it receives them.

MASTER  Then since reason receives all forms and forms differ, what is the result?

DISCIPLE  That reason receives the forms of manifold things.

MASTER  Since reason receives the forms of manifold things, and whatever truly has one form only does not in fact receive manifold forms, what is the consequence?

DISCIPLE  Reason does not in fact receive one form only.

MASTER  And so no single form is inherently assigned to reason.

DISCIPLE  That is so.

MASTER  [F 2.7] Then since reason lacks any form that is inherently its own, and always assumes all forms: necessarily those of all things must be those of its own being. This being the case, since they are differentiated within reason, they must consequently be separate in themselves.
The separateness of reason-apprehended forms

Reason apprehends discreteness of form just as certainly as does sense and just as truly as the discreteness itself exists, even if all existents are joined and united.

(The Master continues) Since reason knows the separateness of the forms of all things, and their forms are inherently separate, reason must therefore know that this difference in the forms of things is intrinsic. But since reason is aware of this intrinsic difference of form, the forms of things must indeed be inherently discrete inasmuch as reason itself adjudged them to be so.

DISCIPLE That is certainly true, and I believe that at last I understand what causes both reason and sense to perceive the discreteness of the forms of things.

MASTER What is the cause?

DISCIPLE It is this: the true being of reason is one that knows itself with the absoluteness of everything else it knows. The same is to be said of sense-perception.

MASTER How is that?

DISCIPLE When sensate forms impress something on a sentient entity, a sensation is produced; and since the form of the impression conforms to that of the perceived object itself, the form of the impression sensed by the percipient will conform to that of the object. This being so, and the form of the perception being the impress on the observer made by the perceived form: then the form of the perception must conform to the perceived form itself.

MASTER How well you have organized your consideration of sense-perception! Now please apply this same sort of consideration to reason.

DISCIPLE Reason inherently has true knowledge of everything known, and whatever knows in this way knows the object through a knowledge that is equal to its own true knowledge within itself. Therefore reason knows what it knows through a knowledge that is equal to its own true knowledge.
This being so, and knowing the separateness of the forms of things: then reason must know the forms of things by a knowledge that equals its own true knowledge of their intrinsic separateness.

MASTER You have put together an excellent explanation of these ideas. But what is their consequence?

DISCIPLE The consequence is that all forms of existents encompassed by sense and reason are intrinsically separate, since they are separate with respect to sense and reason although not in true being, since all existents are united and connected.

MASTER You have learned well about the true knowledge of things as apprehended by sense and by reason. But you are also going to learn more about this later when we discuss the form of particular and universal reason and examine the quality of their apprehension with respect to the forms of things because of the existence of such forms within them, that is, within the two reasons.

5 Quantity as an example of separateness

The pattern of separateness of rational substances and bodies applies also to quantity and the substance that supports it. And so just as color, shape and similar accidents are supported in quantity and quantity in substance, so all forms are supported in primary matter. Whatever is manifest is the counterpart of something unmanifest. All things sustained in primary matter participate in it and universal primary matter participates in them and they in each other; so that the primary matter that supports all forms is like a written book. Reason encompasses all things and is supreme over them.

(The Master continues) Having grasped this, you should also understand the pattern of separateness of the rational substances and accidents and their diversity in themselves and in reason, although they are united in being. This parallels the separateness of sense-perceived bodies and accidents both in themselves and as perceived although they are united in being, as for instance color, shape and mass, which differ from one another and yet are united in being. The same is true of quantity and its sustaining substance.
DISCIPLE  How is that?

MASTER  It is because quantity differs from the substance that underlies it both in itself and in reason, although they are united in being. For instance, the concurrence of quantity with substance is like the union of color and shape with quantity, however separate it may be from substance in itself and in reason, just as each color and shape is separate from quantity in itself and in perception even though not in being.

DISCIPLE  You brought in a fine analogy for the separateness of rational substances when you likened it to the separateness of color, shape, and quantity from substance; and I know that you have enlightened my understanding by this teaching, for I now perceive quantity as entirely supported in substance; and similarly [F 2.9] I see all rational substances as sustained one in another, as color and shape in quantity and quantity in substance.

MASTER  That is correct; and you will also see later that [F 2.10] all forms are sustained in primary matter, just as color, shape, and similar accidents are sustained in quantity and quantity in substance. Thereupon you will clearly perceive that what is manifest is in the image and likeness of what is unmanifest; and also that all things sustained in primary matter are participants in it and that primary matter is common to them and they participate in each other, until you fully realize that the primary matter that underlies all forms is something like an illustrated book or volume of diagrams. Finally you will behold your reason encompassing all things and supreme over them in conformity with the potentiality of mankind.

DISCIPLE  If I can achieve what you have given me hope of, great will be the Lord’s blessing on me. Let us therefore apply ourselves to what we were already engaged in, which is the discussion of matter and form.
6 Universal matter, the key to all rational realities

Universal matter is the beginning of sense-perceptible entities as their substratum and support. But it also is the substance that supports the nine categories that constitute universal form, and is the key to exploration of the rationals.

From infancy man increases understanding through sensation, imagination and cognition, and the soul can recover lost knowledge through stimulation from sense-observation much as a reader interprets the previously learned markings in a book, recalling their meaning.

MASTER What have you considered to be the extreme of sense known realities?

DISCIPLE Universal matter, which supports them and is their substratum. It is by virtue of this that the sensibles subsist; in it they are found, in it they move, to it they are related, from it they originate and to it they return.

MASTER Well understood! But please note in addition that this very universal matter is the substance that supports the nine categories, and that these constitute the universal form that subsists in it.

DISCIPLE I am aware of that. But I hope you will reveal your teaching about this substance with utmost clarity, and establish in my mind something absolute from which I shall never be able to deviate. For I perceive that this substance that supports the nine categories is of greatest excellence and highest quality, and that it is what underlies all the forms of the universe that the senses can detect; and since I see it as far removed from sense perception, I imagine that it marks the boundary between the sensibles and the intelligibles and is the first stage of any exploration of the latter.

MASTER [F 2.11] This substance that sustains the categories is undoubtedly the key to the exploration of what is veiled from sense, since it comes next in order after the sensibles, and since, being structured of the nine categories, it constitutes an example immediately at hand that is subject to the meaning of what is beyond sense perception.
DISCIPLE Please show me how that can be.

MASTER Let me trace out for you in a general way something that will suffice to foreshadow what is to follow. I hold that once the soul has lost its knowledge of the secondary accidents and substances by which it is linked to body, but subsequently recovers that knowledge when it attains to the primary accidents and substances where it reflects upon and recognizes them: it is obvious that the primary substances and accidents that are the realm of nature are displayed to it and its senses adapted to them for no other reason than that once the soul has grasped the primary substances and accidents, it may also grasp through them the secondary ones. (Cf. V,41, end and 42, beginning)

It is for this reason that when a human being gains awareness of sense objects early in life, his understanding increases thereby and proceeds from potentiality to reality, because the forms of sense objects are impressed on his senses, since these are similar, then more tenuously and simply on his imagination, and even more tenuously and simply on his knowing self. Thus the relation of sensible forms to the knowing self is like that of a book to a reader, because when his sight discerns its markings, his knowing self will recall the meaning and truth of those forms.

7 The manifest lower is the counterpart of the unmanifest higher

Since every lower existent derives from a higher, we can use the lower as a guide for identifying the higher which it is a representation.

(The Master continues) This teaching will corroborate for you the truth of my earlier statement that the substance underlying the nine categories is an immediately-at-hand counterpart that embodies the meaning of things inaccessible to the senses.

DISCIPLE Please show me how I can entertain this structured substance as a counterpart in meaning to something that is elsewhere, so that this may become for me a basic principle to lean on for understanding remote and unmanifest realities.
Since our aim was to be lifted up from the lowest to the highest level of being, and everything that has being in the lowest originates in the highest, therefore whatever we find in the lowest we can use as a guide for identifying any higher existent, because the lower is a counterpart of the higher. Indeed, those things that derive from others are a counterpart of those in which they originate. Hence, because the lower descends from the higher it is necessarily the counterpart of the higher. We shall establish later that the lower descends from the higher; and if it is as we say, and we come to know the point where both extremes meet, then it will be certain that the unmanifest is to be known through the manifest.

Now we need an overall example of what we are explaining. Let this be the substance that supports the nine categories. My position is this: our purpose has been to lift ourselves up to the uttermost limit of existence, which is the universal matter that sustains all things and the universal form sustained in it. These are the ultimate of existence on the lower side and its beginning on the side of the Creator whose name is the Most High. Let us examine the lower extreme, the matter that supports the nine categories, and we shall find it to be representative of that Higher and its counterpart.

8 Correspondences between reason and quantity

The form of quantity provides an image on reflection of universal form, and the properties of universal matter are found in lower matter. Primary form merged with higher matter establishes reason; the form of quantity when merged with lower matter establishes body. Many correspondences between these are given. Following this pattern, all existents whatsoever have their similars between the two extremes.

(The Master continues) In just such a way we shall also find that the form of quantity borne by this substance is the counterpart of a universal form. This is the form of reason, borne in primary universal matter just as if the highest extreme were the sun, and the lowest its radiance overspreading the terrestrial sphere.
DISCIPLE  [F 2.13] Please disclose where the similarity between these extremes lies. It is marvellous indeed that you have brought together in this way the opposite ends of things and linked the farthest with the nearest.

MASTER  Consider the properties of universal matter and you will discover them in the lower matter: self-existence, unity, support of diversity and other pertinent characteristics.

DISCIPLE  The likeness between the two matters is not hard to grasp. But the similarity between the two forms—how can I understand that?

MASTER  You must realize that just as primary form by combining with higher matter constitutes the species reason and endows it with existence, so does the form of quantity by combining with lower matter establish the species body and confer existence upon it. It follows that the form of quantity will be comparable to the form of reason.

This can be brought out as follows: the form of reason is unitary and elemental, while that of quantity is really an aggregate of many units. And just as the form of reason is of all forms closest to the higher matter, so that of quantity is closest of all to lower matter. And just as the form of reason is inseparable from higher matter, so that of quantity is indivisible from lower matter. And just as the form of reason pervades the whole substance of higher matter, so that of quantity spreads through the entire substance of lower matter. And just as the form of reason invests and envelops higher matter, so does that of quantity invest and envelop lower matter. And just as the form of reason underlies all forms and all are sustained in it, so does that of quantity support all forms of body and its accidents, while their existence is within it.

And just as shape is the boundary of the form of quantity and its outer limit, so knowledge is the boundary of the form of reason and its outer limit; also, reason’s knowledge is a shape in that it is an encircling boundary like the shape that encloses a mass; and just as a mass combines with another by means of its shape, so does reason combine with other reason by means of its knowledge.
And just as the form of quantity resolves into the point or unit, so does the form of reason resolve into matter and unity. And just as reason when it examines the form of quantity will find that it is the highest of all forms and closest to substance, with the other accidents and forms inferior to it, so will the form of reason when it examines itself ascertain that it is higher than all forms, closer to matter, and the other forms lower.

And just as certain forms exist that are attached to matter and are inseparable from it, such as those of reason and of the elemental substances, while certain ones also exist that are not so attached, such as the forms of the elements and of their products: similarly some of the forms of substance are unattached, such as color, individual shape and other like accidents, and others are attached, such as the form of quantity, which is intrinsic to substance.

And finally, just as the forms of matter present themselves to reason, so do the forms of substance present themselves to sense. And there is like correspondence between all possible similars within the two extremes.

9 The nature of the substance that supports the categories

Knowledge of the substance that supports the nine categories does not require any examination of the categories themselves but rather of their genera, species, differentia and propria; but it must be explored because understanding of it is preliminary to understanding of all rational substances, from which it, however, differs in that it lies at the lower end of the substances and is recipient while they are active.

It is inactive because there is no inferior substance to receive its action, and because quantity envelops and restrains it, as moisture darkens a fire and a murky atmosphere obstructs light. If it were more ethereal it would be more receptive to the activity of spiritual substances.
DISCIPLE Thanks to you I now understand what you explained about the correspondence between the lower and higher extremes of existence. By that you have added greatly to my joy and delight in exploring the substance that underlies the nine categories, because with all the forms that it has, it is a visible example betokening what is invisible and is the primary rational substance. Now, if it is necessary for me to explore this substance, do you consider that afterward I need to study the nine categories that constitute its form?

MASTER [F 2.14] For the purpose of understanding what we are now pursuing and bringing out the science of matter and form you do not require knowledge of the categories, but rather of their genera, species, differentiae and properties whether in common or in difference, in order to ascertain that all of these genera are forms of the substance that is their substratum. However, let your effort be to explore the substance that supports them and be diligent in directing your understanding to that because it is rational rather than sensible and knowledge of it is prerequisite to the understanding of all rational substances.

Now although this substance is rational, it is not of such merit as the other rational substances because it is the nethermost of them and because it is receptive while the others are active.

DISCIPLE How can you tell that it is receptive and not active?

MASTER Every originator other than the primary Creator requires in its work a subordinate substance susceptible to its activity. But the fact is that beneath this substance there is no other that is receptive to its activity, because this substance is the utmost limit of existence and its nethermost extreme, a sort of base for the other rational substances; and also because quantity confines it and prevents it from acting.

DISCIPLE How can it do that?

MASTER Because quantity hinders its motion and obstructs its course by circumscribing and engulfing it. Hence it resembles a flame dimmed by a contaminating dampness that suppresses its liveliness, or a clouded atmosphere that prevents passage of light. If however its composition were tenuous and receptive so that the activities of the rational substances could penetrate it, then the workings of the spiritual substances would be seen in body, breaking through and permeating it much as does the sun when it shines through some obstruction.
Both quantity and remoteness determine the passivity of the substance of the categories

Not only does quantity obstruct, but also remoteness from the source of motion. As quantity increases, motion becomes more ponderous; and there would be no mobility at all if some spiritual activating potency did not penetrate. It is obvious that since in the distribution of existents the first is the uncreated Creator and unmoved Mover, the last will be the opposite, acted upon but not acting, moved but not a mover.

(The Master continues) It is not only quantity, however, that prevents any action by the substance of the categories but also its own nature, which is denied motion by its great distance from the source and root of motion. And since none of the potency of the Creator and Mover of all things outflowed to it by which it might become mobile and active, what happened was that it remained at rest and motionless. If and when it moves, it is made to move.

DISCIPLE What evidence is there that quantity hinders motion in the substance it occupies?

MASTER You will find the evidence in the obvious fact that the more the quantity of any mass increases, the heavier and more burdensome its movement. It is indubitable that when something grows by an increment other than itself, the latter is necessarily the cause of the former; and since the heaviness of the mass is increased by the increment of its quantity, quantity is obviously the efficient cause of the heaviness and is what hinders motion.

DISCIPLE What will your answer be if I point out that if it were quantity that prevents substance from moving and acting, no mass would be found that is mobile, and not even the celestial sphere and the elements would move and act?
MASTER  If no spiritual potency existed that was active and able to penetrate such masses, they would neither move nor act. This is shown by the fact that some part of them is inactive and motionless.

DISCIPLE  I am now convinced that this substance is not active but passive, by the two methods you have used. Is there in addition a third method for demonstrating the same thing?

MASTER  If existents are arranged as opposites and the first reality is the uncreated Creator or Mover unmoved, its opposite will be the final reality, acted upon but not acting, moved but not a mover.

And of course the knowledge that this substance is inactive can also be obtained as follows: it is active only or passive only, or both active and passive, or neither active nor passive. Now, if you compare it with any of the three other groups and note the consequences, you will find them untenable. What remains is the fourth, which is that this substance is passive, not active.

11 Matter, substance and hyle described

Matter is defined as that which is suited to accept a form that it has not yet received. Substance is matter that has received form. What supports the form of the universe is properly matter or hyle, which reason can view as apart from form. Both terms signify a single reality.

DISCIPLE  I want to ask what this substance is and its inherent characteristics. But first [F 2.15] I wish you would differentiate between calling it sometimes substance and sometimes matter.

MASTER  The difference of designation between substance and matter is this: the word matter belongs only to that which is capable of receiving a not-yet-received form, while the word substance really applies to that matter which has already received a form of some sort and because of that form has become a substance in the proper sense.

DISCIPLE  Which of these names is best for us to use in discussing the substrate that sustains the form of the universe?
MASTER    The most suitable name for what sustains the form of the universe is matter or hyle since we are viewing it as divested of the universe form sustained in it. And because we accept it in our reason in that way, as ready to receive the form of the universe, it is properly called matter. For example, gold without the design of a seal but capable of receiving it is the matter of the seal as long as it does not receive the design, but after receiving it will be called its substance.

In this discussion, however, there is no need to worry about assigning a name, because we shall call this underlying reality that supports the form of the universe sometimes matter and sometimes hyle. In fact, we are not concerned over the correctness of such names inasmuch as we mean by them one thing only, which is the underlying reality that sustains quantity.

12 Nature as the source of the underlying substance

The underlying substance that supports quantity derives from a higher one, nature, and is a lower level of this or a lesser potency of it. Nature creates the accidents of sense-knowable entities and establishes them in substance by impressing and depicting their shapes and designs.

DISCIPLE    [F 2.16] Please tell me what this substance is.

MASTER    It is what sustains the form of quantity.

DISCIPLE    I am asking what it is obviously so that I may come to know its reality and true being, not whether it sustains quantity. What, then, is the distinctive character of this substance?

MASTER    Its character derives from a higher substance, from Nature; its true being originates in that of Nature; or, if you wish, say that it is a lower stage of Nature, or a lower potency.

---

95 Nature is the lowest of the elemental rational substances, lower than the Universal Soul and higher than the “substance that sustains the nine categories.”
DISCIPLE Please clarify this idea for me, so that I can be more certain of it.

MASTER That will be done for you shortly, when I show that the lower comes from the higher. But for now I shall explain what you asked about the source of the substance in the following way: when anything arises from something else, there must be congruity between them. If, therefore, substance arises from nature, they will necessarily be congruous.

DISCIPLE Necessarily so.

MASTER Let us suppose that nature creates the accidents of perceptible things and endows substance with them, until this is later proved when we discuss the elemental substances.

DISCIPLE Let us so suppose.

MASTER Then I shall formulate the argument as follows: when something imprints or depicts some design, that design has existence bait in some way. But nature imprints and depicts shapes in substance. Therefore the shapes and designs that are brought about in substance exist somehow in nature. Again, we state that when anything receives some design existing in another, there must be congruity between them. But substance receives shapes and designs from nature. Therefore congruity must exist between substance and nature, and this being so the true being of substance must come from that of nature, or from nature herself.

DISCIPLE This reasoning convinces me that substance originates in nature herself, because of the congruity they share. I say this, however, in agreement with you on the position of nature. Otherwise, if I wanted to take the contrary I should assert that nothing has existence except the substance that sustains the nine categories and its blessed and most high Creator, and that the blessed Creator made and created this substance together with its accidents instantaneously and simultaneously just as they are.

MASTER The response to this will come later when we investigate the existence of elemental substances. For now, however, ask whatever comes to mind about substance.
The Quality and cause of substance; the rule of will

Substance lacks inherent quality, although its very elementality and support of accidents and of the categories amounts to a sort of quality. As to why substance exists, this is embraced in the science of will, which brings form to matter and determines its designs or the differentiae that constitute the species.

Substance divides into elemental and compound. The elemental further divides into reason, soul, form and hyle, and the compound into growing, nongrowing, living, nonliving and all the other dichotomies of differentiae.

But will cannot be fully understood without first mastering universal matter and form, which is related to matter and form as the soul is related to body, reason to the soul, and primary matter and form to reason.

DISCIPLE You have satisfied me as to what this substance is. Now please reveal its quality.

MASTER Are you not aware that the quality of this substance is the nine categories and that they portray it?

DISCIPLE I was well aware that the categories were qualities of substance. But this is not what I am asking about; rather, about the quality of the substance in itself.

MASTER Substance in itself is without quality, since all qualities are resident in the categories that subsist in it. But if anyone suggests that the elementality of substance and its support of accidents are somehow its quality, he will not be far from the truth; for although we hold the substance to be free of accidents, nevertheless it cannot fail to have some sort of form suited to it other than the accidents, and one by which it is distinguished from them.

DISCIPLE Please tell me why this exists.

MASTER [F 2.17] If you have learned what substance is you have along with that learned why it exists because the why is found in the what. Moreover, the teaching on understanding why existents exist is not part of the course we are now following, but will be included in the science of will.
MASTER  Whoever asks to know the why of existence is seeking to know why every one of the genera, species and individuals passes from potentiality to reality and the domain within which each one of them subsists.

[F 2.18] Now since will is the mover of every form subsisting in matter and brings it all the way to the farthest limit of matter, and since will pervades and embraces all things and form serves and obeys it: this is why it was necessary for the impress of the divisions of form, or the differentiae that constitute and divide up the species as well as their representation in matter, to conform to what is present in will in this respect.

DISCIPLE  [F 2.19] You have truly helped me to penetrate a great mystery and have enabled me to appreciate a lofty theme, which is that all things whatsoever are assembled under will, and all depend on it. And all forms of existents require to be formed and evenly impressed in matter, and the overall balanced placement of forms in matter and their maintenance there is by virtue of will, which assembles and situates them in conformity with the bounds and limits that prevail in it. Consequently the forms belonging to will are appropriately arranged and applied to matter as well as controlled and constrained by will. 96

MASTER  You have understood quite well. But just give an example of it so that I may judge how your thinking is being brought to bear on this idea.

DISCIPLE  The division of substances into elemental and compound is an example, and then the division of the elemental ones into Reason, Soul, Form and Matter, and the division of the compound ones into growing and nongrowing, living and nonliving, and all the dichotomies of differentiae that distinguish matter and lead to its existence.

---

96 Although will is introduced in I, #2 as “a divine potency that creates and moves all,” and in I, #7 as the mean between the extremes, and occurs repeatedly throughout the work, it is discussed more fully in V, #36-40.
MASTER You have a thorough understanding of will. But what I have taught you will not suffice for your realization of the mystery and truth of will, because you cannot fully know about it without first appreciating the universality of matter and form. This is because will creates and moves matter and form, and the comparison between will and matter-and-form is like that between the soul and body, between reason and the soul and between primary matter-and-form and reason.

Consequently, you may now return to the queries you had in mind about substance.

14 Higher and lower place

Although forms of inferiors come from their superiors, it is a mistake to suppose that the former have the same conformation as the latter. The descent of the nine classes of existents from the Creator down to bodies reveals that the more anything descends from elementals to compounds the thicker and denser it will be; but space for a compound body is not the same as for an elemental substance even though we may use the same words for both. One is physical, the other spiritual.

DISCIPLE Tell me what sort of existence this substance has and where I am to imagine it as existing.

MASTER Not everything requires a physical place for its situation or existence, because what is not physical but rather an elemental substance remains in its sustaining cause, which must be elemental and compatible with it. Substance, on the other hand, is not inherently physical and requiring a place, but is in fact the place of quantity in which place most assuredly does exist.

DISCIPLE If place exists only in quantity, how in the light of this can substance be the place of quantity? Place, moreover, is the contiguity of the surface of one mass to that of another, and substance lacks any surface by which it can adjoin quantity, substance not being in itself a body.
MASTER  [F 2.22] As you visualize the truth of things you must not change, confuse or distort any inferior forms into their superiors. If you find some form in the individuals, species or genera that are nearest to us, do not conclude that you will discover such a form in existents that are above and beyond these individuals, species and genera. Notwithstanding that the forms imparted to the inferiors are invested by the superiors, they are not to be found there in a conformation identical with that of the superiors. This is a general principle with respect to everything that comes to a lower from a higher.

DISCIPLE      How does this form of place come to the lower from the higher?

MASTER      [F 2.23] The disposition of existents falls as it were into nine classes: (1) the inherence of every thing in the wisdom of the Creator; (2) the inherence of universal form in universal matter; (3) the inherence of the elemental substances in each other; (4) the inherence of elemental accidents in the elemental substances; (5) the inherence of quantity in substance; (6) the inherence of surface in body, lines on surfaces and points in lines; (7) the inherence of colors and shapes on surfaces; (8) the inherence of homogeneous parts in other parts,97 and (9) the inherence of bodies in other bodies, which is known as place.

Is it not the case according to this reasoning that the more anything may descend from elemental to compound the thicker and denser it will be, while the more it ascends, the more rarefied and tenuous?

DISCIPLE      That is very evident.

MASTER      Consequently you should not maintain that just because compounded substances occupy space elemental substances also exist in a space of the same sort, nor that the latter occur in the same sort of space as the former. [F 2.24] I hope you do not find our teaching that substance is the place of quantity unusual. We teach it because substance is quantity’s support, and quantity’s subsistence rests with substance.

---

97 These homogeneous parts are identified by Baeumker with Anaxagoras's homoeomeris discussed by Aristotle in his Physics 187a 25; On the Heavens 302b 13; and On Generation and Corruption 314a 19.
It is not in fact out of line to state that a substance that is not a body may be
the place for one that is, inasmuch as the former supports the latter. Similarly it is
not improper to say that mass is the place for what is not mass, such as color, shape,
line, surface and other physical accidents, since the meaning of place as recognized
is the adjunction of two masses, and these accidents are not masses.

DISCIPLE  [F 2.25a] What I have learned from this lesson is that place is
taught as being of two sorts, one physical and the other spiritual.

15  Division of complex and of elemental substance

Compound body has many divisions subsisting in each other, and this involves the
doctrine of place. Elemental substances also divide into many species that constitute
place for one another as, for instance, in parallel to colors and shapes on surfaces and
surfaces on a mass. Elemental accidents are more rarefied than these but the manifest
entities are counterparts of them, and lower manifest place is a counterpart of higher
unmanifest place.

MASTER    Exactly, because just as substance is of two modes or simplex and
complex, complex body similarly lends itself to division, with each part subsisting in the
other as do the elements, the celestial sphere and all the parts thereof. The idea of place
present in this substance is the inherence of masses in each other and the existence of
parts of the masses in each other. [F 2.25b] The genus of elemental substances is also
broken up into many species existing in each other, and so one such species must
also be the place of another, because one supports the other.

Now when you wish to imagine in what way one elemental substance exists in
another and how one constitutes place for another: just visualize color and pattern
on surfaces, surfaces on masses, and what is still more subtle than these, elemental
accidents in elemental substances, such as accidents subsisting in the soul, since it is
their place.
At this point you may do as you did in the case of the preceding principle that we discussed, that manifest realities are counterparts of unmanifest ones. In conformity with this principle, lower manifest place must be a counterpart of higher unmanifest place; and the same with the others that lie between the extremes of the sequence. We shall make this more explicit in due course, when we discuss the elemental substances.

16 Substance as divisible quantity or indivisible point

All substance lies within quantity and consists of its parts, which are homogeneous. An irreducible part is not to be confused with a point, which by definition is indivisible, because a point is an accident that does not share the nature of body, just as color does not.

DISCIPLE As for the existence of elemental substance in elemental substance, for the moment I have enough knowledge of this truth with the example you propounded, at least until this too is made more explicit. But all the same I do not yet understand the existence of this substance that supports the nine categories and its occurrence in the elemental substance that comes next according to your view. I fail to understand in what way it exists, whether as intermediate between quantity and that substance, in which case it is apart from quantity but follows it in train as the celestial sphere follows the elements, or whether it is present within quantity and does not stand apart.

MASTER Please provide an example of this question, so that the answer may correspond to it.

DISCIPLE Here is an example. I see quantity spreading over the surface of the primary celestial sphere and extending sphere after sphere and element after element all the way to the center. In an overall sense I regard the universe as a single continuous body like a globe, whose outer limit is the upper surface of the encircling primary celestial sphere. What then will you say of the substance of the universe? Does it reside within the totality of its quantity diffused through each and every part of it?
Or is it exterior to quantity, with no bit of it within the body of the universe? Or does the true being of substance lie within the entirety of the universe but nevertheless some fraction of it remains outside?

MASTER How can it be possible for any part of substance to lie outside the mass of the universe within which quantity would have its existence?

DISCIPLE Because the parts of quantity exist in each other all the way to the ultimate limit. Therefore they all exist in the true being of substance, which is exterior.

MASTER I shall now show you that the true being of substance lies within quantity and within all of its parts. Let us put forward the following principle relative to this, stated thus: whatever compound reason may analyze and resolve into something else is composed of that into which it is resolved, as has already been demonstrated by our previous discussion. But reason analyzes the quantity of the substance of the universe and resolves it into its parts. Therefore in the light of this, the quantity of the substance of the universe must be composed of its parts. And since the parts are homogeneous, they are indistinguishable within the concept of quantity.

Let us then select one of its parts for consideration. Will you be able to say of this part, which is one of the parts of the quantity of substance, that it may be divided potentially although in fact it is indivisible? Or that it is potentially indivisible?

DISCIPLE The part that you are designating for discussion is the irreducible terminus of the analysis of body, or the point. If you perceive this part to be a point it is indivisible since if a point could be divided it would not be the least part of quantity.

MASTER I have not held the point to be an indivisible part of quantity, since if we posit it as a part of quantity and such a part must necessarily be quantity; the point will then be quantity, and being so will consequently be divisible.
What is more, if we posit the point as being a part of body and this latter consists of its parts, which in your view are points, then the whole of body will necessarily be indivisible inasmuch as its parts are so.

DISCIPLE I am not suggesting that body is composed of parts that are in fact indivisible, or points, with the resulting indivisibility; neither do I say that body may in fact be reduced to such parts; but rather I am saying this since those (parts are there) potentially.

MASTER I realize that the ambiguity of the term has led you astray from the concept of part intended between us to a different part, because you thought that the designation of point and indivisible ought to be admitted as identical inasmuch as we proposed the least part of quantity. For although parts may coincide in name, they vary as to meaning. That is, a point is said to be part of a mass and the mass reducible to it only accidentally, not in essence or nature, because a point is an accident existing in a mass but not sharing its nature. In the same way color is said to be part of a mass because this divides into surface, color, shape and the other accidents present in it, but these are not of the nature of the mass. Indeed, the constituent part of the quantity of the substance of the world that we proposed is not like that, because it is a part of a kind of quantity that is similar to it, just as any given part of water is not foreign to the nature of water.

17 The parts of quantity

The given part is found to be substance and accident, with its quantity supported by an elemental potency or matter that may be imperceptible to sense. The fact that quantity is perceptible does not negate the presence of an imperceptible supporting substance any more than color hides quantity. Color is to quantity as quantity is to substance.

(The Master continues) Therefore turn your attention away from the accidental part and toward the natural one, that one of the parts of quantity of the substance of the world that we determined on. What can you say of this part? Is it divisible, or indivisible?
DISCIPLE If I say indivisible, the other parts must also be indivisible, and if so it will not be quantity, and if not quantity, they will not be contiguous. Consequently I declare that the proposed constituent part of quantity of the substance of the world cannot be indivisible.

MASTER Tell me, then, with reference to this divisible part: is it elemental substance, or elemental accident, or accident combined with substance?

DISCIPLE I consider it to be elemental substance.

MASTER Did you not postulate that this part is one of the parts of quantity of the substance of the world’s mass? How, then, can it be substance only? Especially since if it were substance only it would not be perceptible nor divisible nor would the other parts be divisible; and in this case the mass made up of the parts would perforce be neither perceptible nor divisible.

DISCIPLE Why did you deny that quantity comes into being from the concurrence of parts, each one of which is itself substance, and that the parts become perceptible in the aggregate even though each one is in itself imperceptible?

MASTER If quantity exists solely by virtue of the concurrence of parts that in themselves are substance, then it will be necessary when quantity meets with quantity for substance to be produced therefrom.

Furthermore, if the parts of quantity themselves are substances, no substance would be sustaining them, and the entire body of the universe would have to be a substance without quantity, for the reason that quantity was the aggregate of substances.

DISCIPLE I shall say, then, that this one constituent part of quantity of the substance of the universe is an elemental accident, lacking anything to support it.

MASTER If you say that this part is an elemental accident without support, then you would be assuming that an accident existed in a supporting nonsubstance.
DISCIPLE You have obliged me to concede that this part is necessarily both substance and accident.

MASTER That being the case, is it so in one way only, or in two different ways?

DISCIPLE Not in one, but in two different ways.

MASTER Well, then, you have now conceded that the part in question is made up of substance and accident, and its body is independent of its accident.

DISCIPLE According to what you have suggested, accident is manifest in this part because it is a part of quantity; but what account can we give of the body that we assumed in it?

MASTER It is an elemental potency that sustains the quantity of the designated part; in other words substance, and even if you prefer, elemental matter carrying the form of the part.

DISCIPLE What is this potency that you have called matter?

MASTER It is an elemental existent of the same nature as universal substance, and it supports elemental quantity without admixture.

DISCIPLE How will you answer if I insist that I see only the form of the part and nothing else?

MASTER If what is manifest in the part is its form, this requires a sustaining matter even though this may not be subject to sense-perception. And if it is matter, that part lacks form and so is not subject to sense-perception. But if it is matter and form together, its matter must necessarily be matter and form together, if the part is matter in the same way that it is form. And if not, and the matter in the part is separate from the form, then the part will have to be composed of substance and accident.

DISCIPLE Your first and second responses have now persuaded me that it is composed of substance and accident. However, some doubt remains in my mind about this inasmuch as I perceive that quantity pervades the whole being of the part and I see no room in it for anything else.
MASTER Your problem in not seeing space for anything in the part but quantity is as if you were asking whether the part itself might be quantity. But this quantity that you see pervading the whole of the part does not take away from it the substance that sustains it. Here is an example based on color and quantity:

Since you believe that color pervades the whole nature of quantity and spreads through all its parts, do you therefore concede that what you see is not the quantity of the mass at all but its color? Or will the color prevent quantity from existing by spreading over it and hiding it from sense-perception? And will you not rather object that quantity may nevertheless be detected by some other sense than sight?

Did you not concede that you discern quantity by apprehending color through the sense of sight, and for that purpose you require no other sense? Hence just as the diffusion of color through the parts of quantity does not prevent quantity from being discovered by means of its color, so the diffusion of quantity throughout the entire nature of substance does not impede its being discovered through the medium of quantity. For this reason I teach that the relation of quantity to substance is the same as that of color to quantity, and that the one corresponds to the other, bringing out and manifesting it.

18 Divisibility of the smallest part

This least part must be considered to be divisible, because all physical lengths are capable of division to infinity, and nothing can be reduced to its non-genus.

DISCIPLE I am now persuaded that the proposed part of quantity of the universe is divisible, and it plainly divides into substance and accident. But what will your answer be if I turn around and say that this part again divides into other yet smaller parts in quantity?

MASTER Was not our proposed part the very least part of mass? And so if some other mass less than this existed, or if this could be divided into yet other particles, the same thing could be said of this one part as of each one of the many that we posited earlier, which is: that it cannot be other than divisible or indivisible, and either matter substance only or accidental form only; or else composed of both matter substance and accidental form together.
DISCIPLE   But since we stipulated that this would be the least possible part, how will it be divisible?

MASTER    We did not assume the division of this part as quantity but as substance and quantity. In the light of this we proposed a division that inevitably required this part to be a compound of substance and quantity, for the following reason: it is not impossible for such a part to be the least one with respect to sense perception, but not in itself. Divisible it is, certainly, because it cannot be any part of quantity without being divisible.

DISCIPLE   How can such a thing be taught, that a part that is the least of parts could be divisible?

MASTER    It is taught of necessity, because no part can possibly be discovered that is indivisible since all physical lengths are divisible to infinity. This is inevitable because nothing can be reduced to a genus that is not its own. In fact, if the agreed part of quantity were to be reduced to an indivisible one, that part would either have to not exist or else exist as elemental substance. Either one is inadmissible.

DISCIPLE   I am surprised that a divisible part can be called the least, when a lesser can be found.

MASTER    Let us, then, propose a part that cannot divide, and let it be altogether the least. Now, such a least part cannot be other than either a part or a nonpart.

DISCIPLE   That is so.

MASTER    If it is a part, it is a portion of another part that when joined to it will be greater than it previously was alone. And now what can you say of the second part that is joined with the first? Is it divisible or indivisible?’ If you say indivisible and the first was already indivisible, a part composed of them cannot be divisible; and if the two together constitute one indivisible part, these two will then be equal to the one, which is untenable. The same may be said of a third and fourth part, and so on to infinity.
But if the composite of all is one and indivisible; that is, if many parts are equal to one part, then the whole mass of the universe will equal one of its parts which is indivisible. Therefore a second part adjoined to the first must be divisible; and if such a second is divisible, the first must also be so by the same necessity and could not be otherwise. Similarly, all parts of the mass must be divisible inasmuch as no indivisible part can be found, and in this respect there is no difference among all parts of body.

If, however, you maintain that the proposed least part is not a part, no other greater part could be found, since if a greater could be found, then the proposed least part would have to be a part for it, and when each individual part of the mass is adjoined to another, the combination of both will be greater than the single component parts. Therefore, no part exists that is greater than the proposed least part, which is unacceptable. Consequently the proposed least part is not a nonpart. Hence it is a part, and being a part is necessarily divisible, as has just been demonstrated.

19 Substance permeates the whole of quantity

The parts of body are not separate but in unbroken unity, so their supporting substance must also be continuous.

DISCIPLE It is now evident to me that the proposed least part is not indivisible, because no indivisible part can be discovered; and evident also that the proposed part of quantity of the world’s substance is composed of substance and accident.

MASTER This will also be made clear to you in another way. Here is our teaching: all forms require for their subsistence a supporting matter. And since quantity is the form of substance, and any part of quantity is still quantity, any part of it must also be a form of substance. Let us state the proof as follows: the least part of quantity is a form, and every form in order to exist requires matter to sustain it. Therefore the least part of quantity requires matter to sustain it.
Also in this way: form in non-matter is imperceptible. But the least part of quantity is a perceptible form. Therefore the least part of quantity does not exist in non-matter. Again, if form is not present in matter, it will not be observed. But the form of the least part of quantity is observed. Therefore it subsists in matter.

DISCIPLE   It is now totally and completely clear to me that the proposed part of quantity of the world’s substance cannot possibly exist in non-matter.

MASTER    So there is no difference between our proposed constituent part of quantity of the world’s substance and the others in their need of a matter to support them.

DISCIPLE   That is true.

MASTER    Consequently every one of the parts of quantity of the world’s substance must subsist in matter.

DISCIPLE   Indeed they must.

MASTER    And since all parts of quantity of the world’s substance are alike in nature and true being, this renders necessary that the true being of substance must permeate the entire nature of quantity.

DISCIPLE   Exactly. But it is not easy to grasp the true being of substance as one and continuous inasmuch as many parts of the world’s mass exist and for each one of these parts we posited a sustaining substance.

MASTER    The least part and the other parts of the mass that we were considering are not in fact separate from each other in any way that could lead to doubt that their supporting substance is one, because the parts of the total mass are contiguous, continuous and without separation, void or space between them. What proves this is the motion of the masses in a direction contrary to their natural motion and the impossibility of any void. Therefore if every one of the parts of the total mass exists in a substance and all are continuous in a single concatenation: then the substance that supports them is necessarily uninterrupted and is a single continuity.
DISCIPLE  I am now convinced that the whole of substance and the whole of quantity constitute an unbroken series. Therefore please explain to me exactly what this quantity actually is, the truth of its existence, and where or how it originates in this substance.

20  Unity as the source of form and of reason

Quantity is unity as the form in matter, second only to the primary Unity by virtue of which everything comes into being. The Unity is without beginning, end, change, nor diversity, but the counterpart unity is possessed of these in a variety of gradations, the nearest to the primary Unity being most elemental and the farthest most multiple and compound. The unity that brings the matter of reason into being is single and elemental, closely connected with the primary Unity. Thus it is capable of comprising all things. Therefore the forms of all things exist in the form of reason.

MASTER  This inquiry was not designed to deal with that, because to understand it you require total knowledge of primary universal form, which is the source of all form and of all individuation. From it, all understanding of form is acquired; all derives from it and all resolves into it. If this form is to be discussed, we shall particularly address its nature and true being, from which you will gain true knowledge of quantity and of all forms borne in matter.

Nevertheless, I shall now give you a brief summary of the science of quantity consistent with what will be presented later. My teaching is as follows: the form present in matter that perfects the true being of everything and by virtue of which all things whatsoever have come into being is unity, which derives from the primal Unity that created it. [F 2.26] This primal Unity, which is self-sufficient, created another and subordinate unity. And because this unity was created by the true primal Unity that is without beginning, end, change nor diversity, it was necessary for the unity created from it to have beginning and end, and to be subject to change and diversity, thereby varying from the perfect primal Unity that was its Creator.

98 In Book V, #31.
Now since this unity, as I have stated, is opposite to the true and perfect Unity and is subject to multiplicity, diversity and mutability, it was perforce divisible into various gradations. And whichever unity is more closely allied to the true and primal Unity will create matter that is more unified and more elemental; and contrariwise, the less it is allied to the primal Unity, the more multiplex and composite it will be. That is why the unity that brings the matter of reason into being is unitary and uncompounded, not diverse nor multiple in its true being. Any divisibility is a matter of accident. This unity, therefore, is more elemental, more unified than the other unities that bring other substances into being, because it is closely allied to the primal Unity that is its progenitor.

That is why the substance of reason was created capable of comprising all things by virtue of the unity of its true being that brought it into existence, since its unity embraces all the unities that constitute the true being of all things. What this means is that the true beings of the unities that subsist in the parts of matter and by unities I mean the forms of all genera, species and individuals—have their emergence and existence in the true being of the primary unity inasmuch as all unities are multiplied out of the primary created unity that causes them to exist, since the true beings of the multiple unities had their origin in that of the one unity. Therefore the forms of all things exist in that of reason, subsisting in it and linked to it; and the form of reason is what supports and unites them, since the elemental unity of it by its own nature brings all unities together, and the forms of all things are augmented unities.

21 From unity to diversity

Because the unity subsisting in the matter of the soul was not unitary like that of reason but lower in rank it expanded, multiplied, changed and diversified according to the descending degrees of matter and its increasing distance from the higher until it reached the matter that supports quantity,
which is the substance of the universe. Here it divides, multiplies and is densified in obedience to the creative unity and becomes solid and the contrary of the higher substance in its ethereality.

Experience provides examples of this variety in a single substance: swiftly rushing water is more tenuous, while stationary water is shadowy; molten lead is partly bright and partly the opposite. Fire appears to be a unity, while air and water are more varied. Thus quantity may be seen as brought about by the convergence of multiple unities.

(The Master continues) And now here is the proof: whatever is reason-known or sense-known is either single or multiple. And since the unity in the matter of reason is that of elementality as has just been explained, the unity in the matter of the soul had to increase and multiply since it is of lower rank than that of reason. This is why it had to increase and multiply and become subject to change and diversity among the other ranks of sustaining matter in conformity with the descending grades of matter toward the lower and away from the higher until it reaches the matter that supports quantity, which is the substance of this world. Here it is increased, divided, multiplied, contracted and condensed in its sustaining matter, all by obedience and subjection under its creating unity. In this way the substance is condensed, made physical, and consolidated.

Hence this lower substance in its denseness and solidity was opposite to the higher in its attenuation and singleness, since this latter substance is substratum for the source and beginning of unity, while the other substance is substratum for its end and limit. That is why there can be no concordance between end and beginning, since the end is said to be the termination and obliteration of the potency of the beginning. We shall explain this when we explore the varieties of forms in substances and the contrasts in their classifications.
[F 2.27] Now, to illustrate what I have said about the singleness of substance from its point of beginning as far as Nature, and its corporeity all the way from Nature to the terminal center, take flowing, rushing water tumbling over itself, which at its source is thin and clear, but progressively thickens and darkens in a pond; or take lead, which when released from the furnace is in part bright and translucent, and in part the contrary. In the same way we can clearly see the multifority of unities in the matter that carries them, for we see the parts of fire as very much united, unalloyed and balanced, to such an extent that its form appears to be single and free from manifoldness, while we find the parts of air and water more varied and divided, so that their parts and unities become plainly manifest.

This, then, is a brief summary of that knowledge which I promised: that the quantity subsisting in substance comes about by the combination of manifold unities. This is why it has been taught that the formation of the universe was from the orderly combination of number and of letters in the air.  

22 Quantity as an aggregation of unities

There are many parallels between number and quantity. Magnitude is made up of number, and this of unities. Both number and magnitude distinguish and measure substances; the former reduces to unities and the latter to points, which are unities and which are rational. Numbers are composed by repeated duplication, and body is comparable in the construction of point, line, surface and mass, which is based on eight points. But the root of each is the one.

Solids occur through compression of parts; vapors through their dispersal. Thus quantity occurs by aggregation and compaction of unities.

DISCIPLE Please make clear to me the methods of determining that the quantity in substance is an aggregate of units.

---

99 On the place of Nature between the two extremes, see V, 15; and as the last of the elemental substances, III, 56.

100 See Sefer Yetzira I, #10 and II, #2-3.
MASTER  This can be shown in many ways inasmuch as the lower form in lower matter is received through the higher form present in higher matter. And since the higher form is a unity, so also is the lower. Moreover, no matter what part of quantity you may point out, it must be either one or many, and plurality exists because of the multiplication of the one. In addition, the number composed of unities is divisible, as is the continuous quantity or magnitude in matter because they belong to the same genus and differ only as to continuity and dispersion. Thus there is no difference between the units of the discrete numbers and those of the continuous quantity found in matter, except that the former are disjunct and the latter conjunct. Therefore what is conjunct derives from what is disjunct, since the concept of continuity in the conjuncts is the same as the continuity of the disjuncts among the dispersed units. That is why continuous quantity or magnitude must come to substance from units.

Furthermore, just as discrete number is found in what is numbered by it, continuous quantity is found in the substance that supports it. And quantity distinguishes among substances and measures them, just as number distinguishes among things numbered and measures them. Number, again, can be reduced to units and the quantity present in substance can be reduced to points; and points are units so to speak present in matter, which is substance; but in fact units do not subsist in matter, for the reason that they are rational.

Further, the composition of body may be likened to that of number, because to construct a number you begin with one; by multiplication it becomes a two, and the two by doubling becomes a four, which doubled becomes an eight. Similarly with body you will begin from a point, which is like a unit, and if you extend to another point, from the duplication of that point which was comparable to a unit a line is created out of those two points that is comparable to the two of number. Then you will repeat the line from the two points and a surface will result which arises from the four points and is comparable to the four of number; after which you will repeat the surface derived from the four points, whereby a mass will come into being that is from the eight points and is comparable to the number eight.
In this way you will assimilate discrete number to continuous quantity both in composition and resolution because the composition of each one springs from perfect duplications. What this signifies is that their root principle is one, since they are assembled from a single reality and are resolved into one.

Furthermore, the more closely associated and compressed the parts of the mass are, the denser and more quantitative, as a stone; while on the other hand the more the parts of the mass are dispersed and released, the more rarified and less quantitative it will be, like the atmosphere. This shows that quantity eventuates in substance by the aggregation and compaction of units in it.

23 The cause of diversity and of body

The units subsisting in compound substance resemble those of elemental substance in that the form is never discrete from the matter that supports it except by rational analysis; although accidental can in fact be separated.

What causes the elemental unity’s transformation from transcendence to body is its distance from the source of unity. But forms of elemental substances are not composed of many units; rather each is of one indivisible unit; because when matter is close to source, elemental and ethereal, it is homogeneous with unity, but when remote, dense and weak fails to be held together by unity and becomes multiple. It is matter that creates separateness as the contrary of unity; unity holds together, while matter is separative.

DISCIPLE It is plain to me now that the quantity in substance consists of units. But what can you say of these units? Were they self-existent and did they later combine and unite in matter?

MASTER The teaching on these units in compound substance that perfect its existence is like the teaching on the other units present in the matters of the elemental substances that perfect their existence and certainly like any teaching whatsoever on form in matter: that form cannot in fact be separated from the matter that bears it.

---

101 On number as discrete quantity see Aristotle: *Categories*, 4b 20.
I refer to substantial, not accidental form for the latter can actually be separated while substantial forms cannot except through rational analysis and synthesis. In this way form is shown to be other than matter, as has already been made clear.

**DISCIPLE**  It is now obvious from what you say that aggregated multiple units were originated and produced from duplications of the primary elemental unity. Tell me, then, what causes the alteration of the elemental one away from singleness and spirituality toward compositeness and corporeality?

**MASTER**  The cause herein is its remoteness from the source of unity and substance’s incapacity to receive oneness in any other way. Lead and water have been given as an example of this, because you will find them to be in part bright and volatile and in part dark and thick. The same is true of the matter that bears form, since it is in part volatile and rarefied and in part corporeal and dense.

**DISCIPLE**  If we say that quantity as the form of substance is made up of numerous units, can we similarly maintain that the forms of elemental substances are also composed of many units?

**MASTER**  Every form of elemental substance is whole and not subject to partition. Certainly no unity is divisible. How indeed will it divide if it is a single reality? This singleness in quantity can divide only by virtue of the substance that is its substratum. Do you not see that all the units into which quantity divides coincide in the form of the one and are diversified only in their substratum?

What this means is that the one brings matter into existence, and by virtue of it they unite and the matter is preserved. Now, when matter is rarefied, elemental and far from inharmony and division, it becomes the peer of the one and unites with it, both becoming one single truly indivisible reality; but when the matter is dense and feeble, it will not be the peer of the one, which then will be unable to bring it to unity and combine with its true being. The matter then separates, not being held together by the one but falling out of conformity with it, and in this way becomes disjunct and manifold.

---

102 See Aristotle: *Metaphysics*, 1045a 36 to b 25.
The figure of proof for this is as follows: whatever acts contrary to a doer acts contrary to the thing done. And matter is contrary to the one that is its form. Therefore matter’s act is contrary to that of the one. But the one causes unity. Therefore matter causes the division that is contrary to unity. Consequently, if matter is said to create unity and yet the one creates unity, then opposites will create a single something, which is absurd.

Again, in this way: the one of and by itself holds together the matter united by it. And any thing that by itself holds together cannot bring about division. Now the proof that the one holds together the matter united by it is this: when the one is separated from what has been united by it, the unification of this will dissolve and it will become a non-one; and perhaps even the matter will be dissolved by the loss of the form, which is one. Again in another way: matter requires the one for its unification, not being self-united. Thus matter is not inherently united, and not being inherently united is inherently divided.

**24 In all substance whether perceptible or rational, there is only matter and form**

The substance of the universe permeates quantity and none of it remains outside. Perceptible substances are made up entirely of matter and form, whether they are universal or particular. The same is true of rationals, which are the spiritual substances that encompass the substance that supports the nine categories or Nature, together with the three Souls and Reason. Universal spiritual substance in its relation to universal physical substance corresponds to the soul and body; both include and support body and yet are discrete from it. Manifest entities are homologous to unmanifest ones.

**DISCIPLE**  It is now self-evident from what you have explained that the substance of the universe spreads through every kind of quantity present in it and extends from the highest point of the encircling sphere to the very center. And the truth of what quantity is has been clearly shown to me. Tell me, therefore, whether any part of this substance remained that was elemental, separate from the universe and without quantity.
MASTER     How could any portion of this elemental substance be found not sustaining quantity, when quantity is its form and comprises it, endows it with existence and brings about its difference from all others? If some elemental substance exists beyond the celestial sphere, it will acquire some form other than quantity, and in that case it and a substance that receives the form of quantity are not one and the same. Moreover, it is not possible for a substance receptive of quantity to exist beyond the celestial sphere, because the boundary at the very top of the containing sphere is the starting point of generation or of nature and the consolidation of its existence. If anyone holds the contrary view, it is as if he believed the earth to be the place of air or air to be the place of the celestial sphere, which is absurd.

DISCIPLE    From all that has been included in our inquiry up to this point, I now understand the substance that supports the nine categories, and also what we examined at the very beginning: that in sense-perceptible substances whether general or particular there is nothing but matter and form. That is what we sought to bring out.

MASTER     In the same way examine also the rational substances, both universal and particular, and in them you will also find nothing but matter and form.

DISCIPLE    What are these universal and particular rationals?

MASTER     [F 2.29] They are spiritual substances that embrace the substance that supports the nine categories: Nature, the three Souls and Reason.\footnote{The activities of Nature, the three Souls and Reason are described in III, 47-48.}

DISCIPLE    Since we are undertaking to consider what comes after the substance that sustains the nine categories, we must understand in what way this substance exists in the following spiritual one, and how the latter differs from the former since it has no physical boundary, and whether this is from congruity or not.
MASTER You should liken the existence of universal substance within universal spiritual substance to the existence of the physical body within the soul, because just as the soul includes and supports the body, exactly so does universal spiritual substance include and support the universal body of the world; and just as the soul is inherently separate from the body, joined with it but not congruent, exactly so is spiritual substance inherently separate from the body of the world and yet joined with it but without congruence.

DISCIPLE Please explain to me the exact relation between spiritual and physical substance.

MASTER [F 2.30] The accepted doctrine of the relation between spiritual and physical substance, and in a general way the relation of spiritual substances with each other and their existence in each other is like the relation of light or fire with the atmosphere, or the relation of color and shape with quantity or quantity with substance, or the relation of spiritual accidents with spiritual substances. In other words, since manifest things are necessarily a representation of unmanifest ones, the relation of spiritual substances and their subsistence in each other must be a counterpart of the relation of the parts of physical substances such as color, shape, quantity and substance and of their existence in each other.

DISCIPLE [F 2.31] What your teaching has proposed is that in the rationals whether universal or particular nothing but matter and form exists. Please make known to me the true understanding of this, and demonstrate to begin with the existence of rational substances that you mentioned you were about to reveal, since to me it seems that the teaching on this matter is beset with difficulties.
My own view is that in the whole of existence there is nothing but the substance that supports the nine categories and its supreme Creator on high; but as to whether other intermediate substances lie between the high and holy Creator and the substance of the categories requires much proof and prolonged exposition.

Let us, therefore, undertake this in the following third tractate with the help of God and His perfection.
1 The Creator, the intermediates, and the final creature

The existence of elemental substances must be demonstrated so that definite knowledge of them can be acquired. First must be posited a fundamental disparity between the primary Creator and the final creature and their lack of concord and relation. This necessitates intermediate substances, yet there seems no basis for such substances to stand nearer to the primary Creator than does the substance that supports the nine categories. The Master will provide proofs.

DISCIPLE What idea are we to take up in this part?

MASTER Since our purpose is to find matter and form in the elemental substances and you are doubtful of the existence of such substances, what we must first examine in this section is the verification of the elemental substances so that we may acquire true and definite knowledge of them until such time as their existence may be established by the requisite proofs. We shall then proceed to examine the doctrine of matter and form in the elemental substances as we did in the compound ones. This we shall undertake in Book Four, following this one.

[Falaquera 3.1] Let us begin, therefore, by introducing proofs of the existence of an intermediate substance between the supreme and holy Creator and the substance that supports the nine categories. At this point we shall posit the following fundamental principle: if the beginning of existing things is the primary Creator uncreated, and the end of things is the final creature creating nothing, then beginning and end differ in essence and effect. If beginning is no different from end, then the first is the same as the last and the last as the first.

---

104 Gabirol has given partial lists of the elementary substances in II, 13 (p. 49) and II, 24 (p. 70). The full, definitive list is found below in III, 27 (p. 131): “Matter, Form, Reason, the three Souls, and Nature.”
DISCIPLE  What is the explanation of this difference between the supreme and holy Creator and the final creature?

MASTER  The rationale of the difference is the lack of resemblance and of characteristic quality, whereby any possible relation and harmony are missing, since harmony depends on similitude.

DISCIPLE  How can it be true that between the primary Creator and the substance that supports the nine categories there are intermediate substances that have greater affinity for the Creator, since all differ from It and none is qualified to be more closely related than any other?\textsuperscript{105}

MASTER  Why do you not assume that the intermediate substances follow continuously after the high and holy primary Creator, just as you assumed that the substance that supports the nine categories did so?\textsuperscript{106} Especially since those substances are elemental and spiritual.

DISCIPLE  \textit{[F 3.2a] It is very difficult to confirm the existence of elemental substances. Please therefore set forth the proofs that there is some intermediate substance between the primary Creator and the final creature.}

MASTER  I shall provide for you a variety of proofs designed to confirm the existence of intermediate substances, each one of which will demonstrate that they do exist. But I do not undertake to arrange the proofs in proper order because this would serve little purpose; and also so that you may drill yourself in classifying them and grouping each with any corresponding one. Hold in mind, then, the terms of their premises and observe the combinations of terms according to the rules of logic. In this way you will grasp the true conclusions that follow from them.

\textsuperscript{105} Further discussed in III, 55.

\textsuperscript{106} II, 12, p. 47, bottom (Disciple’s speech).
2 to 10 Fifty-six proofs for an intermediate substance

Fifty-six proofs of the existence of an intermediate substance between the primary Creator and the substance that supports the categories, based on the properties of each.

2 Proofs 1-11

(The Master continues) (1) [F 2b] The primary Creator is the beginning of all things. And the beginning of things differs from their end. Now the substance that supports the nine categories is the farthest extreme of things. Therefore the primary Creator differs from that substance. Taking this conclusion as premise, I shall state: the primary Creator differs from the substance that supports the nine categories. Now, all different have an intermediate. Therefore between the primary Creator and the substance of the categories there is an intermediary.

DISCIPLE But what evidence is there of an intermediate between all differents?

MASTER If no mean between the differents existed other than themselves, they would then be one and the same, not different.

DISCIPLE But even though the primary Creator may differ from the substance of the nine categories, still there is no need for an intermediate between them, for [F 3.3] the soul differs from the body and yet they have no mean.

MASTER If there were no pneuma as mean between soul and body they would not be joined to each other. Therefore [F 3.4a] if the primary Creator differs from the substance that bears the categories and there is no mean between them they could not be joined; and if not joined the substance would not exist even for an instant.

(2) Every substance is either elemental or compound. And the elemental is prior to the compound as its cause. Now the substance that supports the nine categories is compound, and therefore elemental substance is its prior.

---

107 See II, 9, p.43, ¶ 3 and II,10, ¶ 1 (p. 44, Master’s first speech).
108 See proof (10), and III, 51.
Every compound is made up of its elements. But every such compound is subsequent to the elements of which it is made up. And the substance that supports the nine categories is made up of its elements. It must therefore be subsequent to the elements of which it is made up.

(3) [F 4b] The primary Creator is itself the authentic Unity without multiplicity,\textsuperscript{109} while the substance that supports the nine categories exists in the maximum multiplicity beyond which no greater multiplicity exists. Now every multiple compound resolves into a unity. Therefore between the authentic One and the multiple compound there must be intermediates.

(4) The multiplicity present in the sustaining substance of the nine categories is necessarily grouped under a unit of the same genus. But the authentic Unity is not of the same genus. Therefore this multiplicity cannot be grouped under the authentic Unity.

(5) [F 4c] Every creator brings into being what is similar to itself. And elemental substance resembles the primary Creator. Therefore it is the primary Creator that brings elemental substance into being.

(6) The substance that carries the nine categories is manifold, and every manifold is an aggregate of many units. Therefore the substance of the categories is an aggregate of many units. Now preceding any aggregate of many units there is always another that is less multifold. Therefore another less multifold substance precedes that of the nine categories.

(7) Previous to every aggregate resulting from numerical duplication there must be numerical proportions all the way down to the number one. Now the substance that supports the nine categories is an aggregate resulting from the doubling of number. Therefore substances aggregated by doubling necessarily precede it until the unit-substance is reached.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{109} For the two unities see II, 20, p.62, bottom and IV,14.
\end{footnotesize}
(8) [F 3.5] The more a substance descends, the more manifold it becomes; and contrariwise, the more it ascends the more unified. Now whatever assumes multiplicity descending and unification ascending must attain to the authentic unity. Therefore multiple substance must indeed attain to true unity of substance.

(9) The substance that supports the categories is a species with differentiae, propria and accidents. Now every species differs from the others included in the same common genus. Therefore the category-bearing substance differs from any other species included in the same common genus.

(10) [F 3.6] The microcosm reflects the order of the macrocosm. Now the substance of reason, which is more elemental and more excellent than all microcosmic substances, is not conjoined with the physical body because the soul and the pneuma intervene. And since this is held to be a reflection of the macrocosm, the latter’s most elemental and most excellent substance does not conjoin with body, which is the substance that sustains the categories.

(11) If nothing intervenes between the primary Creator and the substance that supports the categories, the primary Creator itself must be the author of that substance. If that is so, then that substance existed eternally within the Godhead. But the substance did not always exist. It was therefore not created by the primary Creator, who consequently is not of itself the author of the substance; and if not, an intermediary will of necessity occur between them.

But if some one should object that there is no intermediary between them, then the converse will apply, which is that if nothing intervenes between the primary Creator and the substance of the categories, the Creator will then not of itself be the author of the substance. But we have previously stated that if nothing intervenes between Creator and substance, the former must be its author. Hence it will be at once Creator and noncreator, which is impossible.

3 Proofs 12-23

(12) Physical substance must move within some reality that is suited to it and joined with it. The primary Creator, however, is neither receptive of nor joined with anything. The substance that supports the categories consequently does not move within the primary Creator.
(13) [F 3.7] The motion of the substance that supports the categories takes place in time. But time belongs to perpetuity, and therefore the category-substance belongs to perpetuity. Now the primary Creator lies beyond perpetuity, which is therefore the mean between it and the substance. But perpetuity is perpetuity for what is everlasting and duration for what endures. Consequently there is something that stands intermediate between the primary Creator and the category-bearing substance, whose perpetuity is duration. Therefore the substance of the categories is not joined to the primary Creator.

(14) The potency or substance by means of which the substance that supports the categories is moved must be joined with it and mingled with it. Now the primary Creator is neither joined to or mingled with anything at all. Therefore the potency or substance that moves the substance of the categories is no part of the true being of the primary Creator. And since it is not, there must be another intermediate substance that imparts motion to the substance of the categories.

(15) Locomotion derives from the soul. And the substance that supports the categories moves locally. Therefore its motion derives from the soul.

(16) The act of the primary Creator is to create something from nothing. Now the substance that sustains the categories derives from its constituents. It was therefore not created from nothing.

(17) All contraries have an intermediate with resemblance to each. Now the primary Creator is contrary to the substance of the categories since it is Creator only, while the category-substance is creature only. Therefore between them must exist an intermediate that is both creator and creature.

(18) Everything has an opposite that is different from itself. And the substance that sustains the categories is slower in motion because it moves in time. Therefore a swifter substance must exist that moves in non-time. This is the intermediate substance between the primary Creator and the substance that sustains the categories.
(19) The potency of the substance that supports the categories is not illimitable. It originates either in the true being of substance or elsewhere. But it cannot originate in the true being of substance, since this is moved by another. Now if this potency is not from substance, it is either from the true being of the primary-Creator or from an intermediary between them. But it is not from the primary Creator, since in that case the true being of the primary Creator would be necessarily divided, being the source of a limited potency; and since an illimitable is indivisible, the potency in the substance of the categories cannot derive from the primary Creator. It was therefore necessarily derived from the other, from the intermediary between them.

Let no one protest that the potency of the intermediary is illimitable. In that case, although illimitable in consequence of being elemental, it is nevertheless limited in consequence of being a created substance. The intermediate is therefore necessarily limited, because created, and its Creator is illimitable. For this reason, just as they are opposed in relation to activity and passivity, so also are they opposed in relation to limitation and illimitability.

(20) The substance that sustains the categories has been structured. And what has been structured conforms to a paradigm. Hence the substance of the categories conforms to a paradigm. I take this as premise and state: the substance of the categories conforms to a paradigm. Now when anything corresponds to a pattern, the pattern is its prior. Therefore the paradigm to which the substance conforms is prior to this latter.

Again, the paradigm of the substance is prior to the substance molded in its image. The prototype however is a substance. Therefore the substance of the paradigm is prior to the substance that images it. Consequently a substance exists that is prior to the substance of the categories.

(21) Any substance that is the mean between two others borders on both. Now the substance of the soul borders on that of reason, and the substance that supports the categories is contiguous to this. Therefore the substance of the soul lies between that of reason and that of the categories.
(22) Elemental substances such as the soul and reason are forms for compound substances. But every form embraces what has been shaped. Therefore elemental substances embrace compound ones. And the substance that sustains the categories is compound. Consequently an elemental substance embraces it.

To the extent anything is superior, it resembles form. Therefore the superior must be form for the inferior. And elemental substance is superior to compound. Hence elemental substance is form for compound. Now the substance of the categories is compound. Therefore elemental substance is form for the substance of the categories.

The soul and reason are elemental substances. And every elemental substance embraces a compound one. Hence the soul and reason embrace the substance of the categories. And what embraces another is superior to what is embraced. Consequently the soul and reason are superior to the substance of the categories.

(23) The substance of the categories is compound. And no intermediate stands between compound and elemental. Hence there is no intermediary between the substance of the categories and elemental substance. And anything without mean between itself and another follows it in sequence. Hence the substance that supports the categories follows elemental substance in sequence.

4 Proofs 24-27

(24) The primary Creator necessarily accomplishes its perfect handiwork timelessly. And if a creator brings its perfect creation timelessly into being, its unmediated subject must be perfect in timeless receptivity. Therefore the unmediated subject of the primary Creator must be perfect in timeless receptivity.

To this conclusion the following minor premise is subjoined: but the substance of the categories is not perfect in timeless receptivity, since its motion takes place in time. Therefore the substance of the categories must not be the unmediated subject of the primary Creator.
(25) Every subject must submit to action. And that which truly submits to action must receive the power to act. Consequently every subject must receive the power to act. Following this conclusion I posit: the unmediated subject of the primary Creator receives the power to act. And what receives the ability to act does act. Therefore the unmediated subject of the primary Creator must act. To this conclusion the following is subjoined: the substance that sustains the categories does not act. In consequence this substance is not immediately subject to the primary Creator.

(26) The substance that supports the categories moves. But what moves is a subject. Hence the substance of the categories is a subject. And all passivity issues from potentiality to actuality. Therefore the passivity of the substance of the categories issues from potentiality to actuality. Proceeding from this conclusion I state: the receptivity of the substance of the categories issues from potentiality to actuality. And everything that passes from potentiality to actuality brings into actuality only what truly exists. Therefore the receptivity of the substance of the categories brings from potentiality to actuality that which truly possesses existence, with no intermediary between them.

Again I take this as premise and state: the issuance of the receptivity of the substance of the categories from potentiality to actuality is because it has veritable existence, and there is no intermediary between. Now the primary Creator exists neither potentially nor actually. Therefore the passage of the receptivity of the substance of the categories from potentiality to actuality does not derive from the primary Creator with no intermediary.

(27) The soul is self-moving but in space. And whatever has spaceless self-motion is said to have uniform or simple motion. Therefore the soul moves by simple motion. Beginning with this conclusion I state: the soul moves by simple motion. And any simple entity is followed by a secondary. Consequently a secondary motion follows the simple motion of the soul.

---

110 Because to exist actually would require form. See proof 35.
According to another sequence: if the soul is in itself a primary mover and primary motion is simple, the motion of the soul must be simple. That simple motion is primary is proved by the fact that if it is not, neither the secondary nor the other motions will exist. Since the soul is in and of itself a primary mover, it therefore moves by simple motion.

Taking this conclusion as premise I shall state: if the soul because it is inherently a primary mover moves by simple motion, the next mobile must move by secondary motion. But the soul, because it is inherently a primary mover, moves by simple motion. Therefore the next mobile moves by non-simple motion.

I shall premise this conclusion and state: the simple motion of the soul is followed by diversified motion. And the substance that sustains the categories moves by diversified motion because each part of it moves in two places. It shifts from a first place to a second and from a second to a third. The second and third place will resemble the first and second, and so on to the final place. Since the secondary motion follows the simple motion of the soul, and the substance of the categories moves by diversified motion: therefore the motion of the substance of the categories follows the simple motion of the soul.

Again by another sequence: the substance that supports the categories moves by secondary motion. And anything that moves by secondary motion ranks after what moves by simple motion. Consequently the substance of the categories ranks after a substance that moves by simple motion. Again I shall begin with this and state: the substance of the categories ranks after a substance that moves by simple motion. Again I shall begin with this and state: the substance of the categories ranks after a substance that moves by simple motion. And the soul moves by simple motion. Therefore the substance of the categories ranks after the substance of the soul.

Again in another way: if the secondary motion by which the substance that supports the categories moves reverts to simple motion, its motion must rank after the simple motion of the soul. But the secondary motion by which the substance of the categories moves does return to simple motion.
This is because each part of this moving substance returns to the place from which it moved, and then its motion becomes unified. Therefore the motion of the substance of the categories ranks after the simple motion of the soul.

Similarly I shall premise this conclusion and state: if the motion of the substance that supports the categories ranks after that of the soul, then this substance must rank after the motion of that principle. Accordingly it was indeed necessary for the substance of the categories to rank next to that of the soul, there being no intermediary between the motion and the substance. In fact the motion of the substance of the categories does follow the motion of the soul; therefore that substance must follow the substance of that principle.

5 Proofs 28-33

(28) Whatever, being a whole, receives something from another without intermediary, receives more of that than if it received with intermediary. Therefore if one part of a whole receives more of something than another, what receives without intermediary receives more than does the other.

The proof of this conclusion will be shown by conversion of the negative: whatever whole receives something from another without mediation is not more receptive in one part of itself than in another. Now the conversion of this is as follows: when some part of anything is not more receptive of something than is another, that whole is receiving without mediation. If to this we join the overall affirmative, it is: whatever whole receives something from another without mediation is more receptive of it than it would be with mediation. Therefore when any part of something is not more receptive of something else than is another part, that whole is more receptive without mediation than with it.

Next we shall posit this affirmative: substance is so constituted that one part of it accepts motion more readily than another part; and I shall join to this a negative, giving the following syllogism: substance is so constituted that one part of it accepts form more readily than another part. Now a whole, no part of which is more receptive of something than another part, is more receptive of that thing than if it were received by mediation. Therefore substance does not accept form more readily than it would by mediation.
Next in order let us posit a universal: whatever accepts anything without mediation accepts it more readily than by mediation. To this I shall join the negative: substance does not accept form more readily than if by mediation; and the syllogism will run as follows: whatever accepts anything without mediation accepts it more readily than by mediation. But substance does not accept form more readily than by mediation. Therefore substance does not receive form without mediation.

Proof of this conclusion is by conversion of the affirmative premise in this way: whatever accepts anything without mediation accepts it more readily than by mediation, and the converse is: whatever accepts something without mediation more readily than with it accepts without it. The syllogism will run as follows: substance does not more readily receive form than by mediation. And whatever receives more readily without mediation than with it receives without it. Therefore substance does not receive form without mediation.

Again in another way: the substance that supports the categories is so constituted that part of it will receive form more readily than another part. Now a whole, part of which accepts something more readily than another part, does not receive it without some intermediary. Therefore the substance of the categories does not sustain form without some sort of intermediary other than itself.

(29) If all existents are arranged according to opposition, and the substance of the categories is a potency that accepts its own proper form, there must exist an opposite potency that accepts all forms. This is the property of the elemental substances.

(30) If the fundamental principle common to all existents is arrangement by opposites, then everything included under this principle must be so arranged. And the fundamental principle of existents is indeed their arrangement by opposites as sustaining and sustained. Thus all things whatsoever that are included under this principle must be arranged by opposites.
Now if a compound substance exists, an elemental one must exist over against it. And a compound substance does exist. Therefore an elemental substance exists. Now if an elemental substance exists it will be either above the compound or below it. If the elemental is below the compound, then it is created by the compound. But compound substance is created by elemental. Therefore the elemental is not below the compound, and if not below it must be above it. So the syllogism will run as follows: elemental substance stands above compound. And the substance that supports the categories is compound. Therefore elemental substance stands above the substance of the categories.

(31) Elemental and compound substance unite without loss of the form of either. And all things that unite without loss of the form of either are compatible. Therefore elemental and compound substance are compatible. And whatever things are compatible belong to the same genus. Therefore elemental and compound substance belong to the same genus. And all things that belong to the same genus fall under that which constitutes their genus. Hence elemental and compound substance fall under the same genus. Therefore a substance exists that is above them, is more elemental, and is common to them both.

(32) If the primary Creator is timeless, then the prime subject of its act must experience timelessly. But the primary Creator is timeless. Therefore its prime subject must experience timelessly. I shall premise this conclusion and state: the prime subject of its act must experience timelessly. And the substance that sustains the categories does not experience timelessly. Therefore the substance of the categories is not the prime subject of the primary Creator.

(33) The experience of every subject must take place either in time or not. First let us posit the following principle: what experiences timelessly is prior to what experiences in time; and let us take the converse of this: that which is prior to what experiences in time experiences timelessly; and we join this premise to it: whatever experiences timelessly has no other subject prior to it. Therefore whatever exists prior to that which experiences in time will have no other subject previous to it.
Let us posit this supporting principle: whatever experiences in time is subsequent to whatever experiences timelessly. Now let us take the converse, namely: anything subsequent to that which experiences timelessly experiences in time. And let us subjoin this supporting premise: when anything experiences in time, no other subject is found subsequent to it. Therefore no other subject is found subsequent to what follows the one that experiences timelessly.

To this conclusion we shall subjoin another premise: the substance that supports the categories experiences in time. And that which experiences in time comes after that which experiences exempt from time. Therefore the substance of: the categories comes after that which experiences exempt from time. Now to this conclusion I shall subjoin the previous one: no other subject is found subsequent to what follows the one that experiences timelessly. Therefore no other subject is found beyond the substance that sustains the categories.

Again by a different and brief order: elemental substance experiences timelessly, and compound substance experiences temporally. But no other subject is found that is prior to the whole of timeless experience, and none subsequent to the whole of temporal experience. Therefore no other subject is identified as prior to elemental substance, nor any subsequent to the substance that sustains the categories.

6 Proofs 34-37

(34) Whatever moves continually by local motion has been separated from past motion and is in readiness for future motion. Now whatever separates from something and approaches something else is proceeding from potentiality to actuality. Next I shall state: the substance that sustains the categories moves continually by local motion. And whatever moves continually by local motion proceeds from potentiality to actuality. Therefore the substance that sustains the categories proceeds from potentiality to actuality. And whatever passes from potentiality to actuality is incomplete. Consequently the substance of the categories is incomplete.
Next I shall assert: if any creator is perfect, the objective of its immediate act is perfect. But the primary Creator is perfect. Therefore the objective of its immediate act is perfect. I shall premise this conclusion and declare: the unmediated objective of the primary Creator is perfect. But the substance that sustains the categories is not perfect. Consequently this substance is not the immediate objective of the primary Creator.

(35) The forms in the substance of the categories pass from potentiality to actuality. And whatever part of anything passes from potentiality to actuality is caused to move by something else that has actual existence, and the former is potentially the latter. Therefore the forms that occur in the substance that bears the categories are caused to move from potentiality to actuality by other truly existent forms, and the former are the latter in potentiality.\textsuperscript{111}

Let us take this conclusion as premise and subjoin the following: the true being of the primary Creator is without form.\textsuperscript{112} Therefore the true being of the primary Creator is not what brings the forms that occur in the substance of the categories from potentiality to actuality.

(36) When anything is the immediate recipient of something from another, nothing else that is more suitable for its reception can be identified. If the substance that sustains the categories receives body immediately from the primary Creator, then no other substance can be identified that is better suited to the intent of body. But an elemental substance such as the soul or reason is better suited to the intent of body than is the sustainer of the categories. Therefore this latter is not the immediate recipient of body from the primary Creator.

\textsuperscript{111} Truly existent forms are those of elemental substance. See III,17.

\textsuperscript{112} See proof (26).
(37) Whatever immediately moves the substance that sustains the categories cannot be limitless, because its dynamic must be either endogenous or by accident. If its dynamic is out of its own true being, which is limitless, then the resultant force can not be limited. But the motion of the substance is limited. Therefore the true being that impels it is not limitless. And if its dynamic is by accident its true being is again not limitless, since what is illimitable is not subject to accident.

Proof of this can be set forth as follows: what is illimitable is changeless. And what is subject to accident changes. Therefore anything illimitable is not subject to accident. Consequently what immediately moves the substance cannot be illimitable. Hence it is limited. We take this as premise and state: whatever immediately moves the substance that sustains the categories is limited. And the primary Creator is illimitable. Therefore the primary Creator is not the immediate mover of the substance.

Again by a different sequence: if the immediate mover of the substance is illimitable, its motion is boundless. But its motion cannot be boundless because its substance is limited. Therefore the unmediated mover of this substance cannot be illimitable. And finally we shall append to this conclusion the statement: the primary Creator is illimitable. Hence the primary Creator cannot be the immediate mover of substance.

7 Proofs 38-43

(38) The motion of the substance that sustains the categories must be either natural or willed. If natural, the primary Creator will not be its immediate impeller because the primary Creator accomplishes no natural effect without mediation. And if it is willed, and the substance inherently lacks will, then this substance must depend on some other to endow it with voluntary mobility. Such a substance cannot be the primary Creator, which is without mobility. Therefore what causes the motion of the substance of the categories is something other than the primary Creator. This therefore is not the immediate impeller of substance.

113 Motion is discussed by Aristotle in Physics, VIII, 4 and 5.
(39) That which impels the substance of the categories must necessarily be either mobile or at rest. If at rest, it cannot impel the substance of the categories. In other words, this impeller can either move or not. If it can, it is mobile, but if not, it could not impel anything else.

Now the proof that the impeller of substance cannot move it if it cannot move itself will be as follows: let us assume that what impels substance cannot move itself. And anything that cannot move itself cannot move another. Hence what we assumed to be the impeller of substance cannot move it. Consequently the impeller of substance cannot move it and yet itself be at rest. Therefore the impeller moves.

Another proof that the impeller of substance that endows it with the capacity for motion is itself mobile will be this: the impeller of substance endows it with the capacity for motion. And whatever bestows something on another is more worthy of possessing what is bestowed than is the recipient. Thus the impeller of substance that endows it with the capacity for motion is more worthy of possessing the capacity for motion than is the receiving substance. Therefore the immediate impeller of substance is mobile.

I shall premise this conclusion and assert: a substance that immediately impels another is mobile. And the primary Creator is at rest. Therefore the primary Creator is not the immediate impeller of substance.

(40) The substance that sustains the categories is a body. And any body is in itself at rest. Thus the category-substance is inherently at rest. And what is at rest is so by reason of the termination of motion. Consequently the substance of the categories exists by reason of the termination of notion. And whatever exists by reason of the termination of motion has a mobile entity that is prior to it. But anything that is mobile is a substance. Therefore some other substance that is mobile precedes the substance of the categories.

(41) A substance that is subject to the primary Creator must be either mobile or fixed. It cannot be fixed, since the primary Creator impels, and if its subject were fixed it would not impel. Therefore a subject of the primary Creator must be mobile.
This being so, it moves either in time or timelessly. But it cannot move in time since its impeller is timeless. The argumentation for this will be as follows: the primary Mover impels timelessly. And whatever is moved by a timeless impellent moves timelessly. Therefore what is impelled by the primary Mover moves timelessly. Now the substance that sustains the categories does not move timelessly. Hence it is not impelled by the primary Mover.

(42) If something exists that moves in time, something must also exist that moves timelessly, for if nothing moved timelessly, the primary Mover would not impel timelessly but would do so in time; and in consequence would impel at once in time and timelessly, which is impossible.

(43) If the primary Creator does not move, whatever is impelled by it must move timelessly. This is because if it moved in time, a timeless impeller would have to precede it; but only the primary Mover precedes it. Therefore the primary Mover would be moving timelessly. But the primary Mover does not move in any way. Accordingly, what it impels does not move in time. We now premise this and propose: anything impelled by the primary Mover does not move in time. And the substance of the categories does move in time. Therefore what the primary Mover impels is not the substance that sustains the categories.

8 Proofs 44-48

(44) The motion in the substance of the categories is subject to change.\footnote{Because it passes from potentiality to actuality. (Brunner,73 n.)} And anything that is subject to change can be acted upon. Therefore the motion of this substance can be acted upon. But the true being of the primary Creator cannot be acted upon. Consequently the motion in the substance that sustains the categories is not from the true being of the primary Creator. Hence it is from the true being of some other substance.
(45) Anything because of which something that has been impelled is receptive will be by nature receptive. And the motion present in the substance that sustains the categories is receptive. Therefore that which causes its motion is receptive. Repeating, that which causes the motion of the substance of the categories is receptive. And the primary Creator is not receptive. Therefore the primary Creator does not cause the motion of the substance of the categories.

(46) The motion that is diffused throughout the substance of the categories must be either substance or accident. If it is accident, its cause will be a substance that is either limited or illimitable. And it cannot be illimitable, since it is joined to a limited substance. But if it is limited, it cannot be the primary Creator.

If the motion is a substance, what is applicable to its causal substance is applicable to it, namely limitation or illimitability. If limited, this cannot be the primary Creator. And if illimitable, it cannot be joined to a limited substance nor will it create any limited product. Now the impelling substance is joined to a limited one and does create a limited product. This is because all movements in substance are limited. Therefore that which impels the category-substance is not illimitable. The primary Creator is however illimitable. In consequence that which impels the substance that sustains the categories is not the primary Creator.

(47) Whatever moves in illimitable space cannot traverse it in measurable time. (But) the substance that sustains the categories traverses the space in which it moves in measurable time. Therefore this substance cannot be moving in illimitable space. Next with this as premise I shall state: the substance of the categories does not move in illimitable space. In consequence the substance of the categories does not move within the primary Creator.

Again by another sequence: the substance that sustains the categories traverses the space in which it moves in measurable time. Now when anything traverses the space in which it moves in measurable time, it moves in a limited space. Therefore the space in which the substance of the categories moves is limited. Now when we add to this conclusion the fact that the primary Creator is not limited, the outcome will be that the space in which the substance of the categories moves is not the primary Creator.
(48) The substance that sustains the categories is limited. And a limited substance cannot move in an illimitable one. Therefore the substance of the categories cannot move in an illimitable substance. To this I shall subjoin: the primary Creator is illimitable. Consequently, the substance of the categories cannot move in the primary Creator.

9 Proofs 49-53

(49) Any elemental substance that of itself joins together with another is subject to limitation specifically where it is contiguous with the other. And anything that terminates at something else is by nature circumscribed. Therefore, whatever elemental substance is joined together with another is by nature circumscribed. I shall now premise this and state: any elemental substance that of itself joins together with another is by nature circumscribed. And the nature of the primary Creator is illimitable. So the nature of the primary Creator does not join together with any one of the circumscribed elemental substances.

Again I shall posit this conclusion and add: the nature of the substance of the categories is circumscribed. Therefore the nature of the primary Creator is not joined together with the substance of the categories. If (however) between the nature of the primary Creator and the substance of the categories no intermediary existed, the primary Creator would be joined together with the substance of the categories. But the nature of the primary Creator is not joined together with this substance. Consequently between the substance and the nature of the primary Creator an intermediary does exist.

(50) Whatever is either elemental or compound and is by nature contained within limits joins with another at its extreme and conversely is joined by that other at its own extreme. Therefore whatever joins together with something that is by nature contained within limits is itself so contained, as is whatever is joined with it and what follows in train: each one is by nature contained within limits. Now the substance that sustains the categories is by nature contained within limits. Consequently any following substance is by nature so contained.
(51) If the substance that sustains the categories has been created from no other, then no other can be identified that is of greater perfection and potency. But a certain substance of greater perfection and potency is identifiable. Therefore this substance has not been created underived from any other.

Again by another sequence: if some substance more perfect than that of the categories is identified, then the latter arises from it. That which results from another is inferior in potency to that from which it arises; and that which is inferior to another in potency is not so perfect as the original potency from which it arose. Therefore that which comes from another is not so perfect as its original source. Next I shall premise this and state: that which arises from another is not so perfect as the original from which it proceeded. And what is not so perfect as its original has been diminished. Consequently that which comes from another is imperfect.

Again I premise this, repeating: that which arises from another is imperfect. And for every imperfect there is something more perfect. Consequently for whatever comes from another there is something more perfect.

I shall now state the converse of this as follows: what is found to be more perfect than another is the source of that other. To this we shall subjoin: another substance is found to be more perfect than that of the categories. Therefore the substance that sustains the categories proceeds from that other. Again, following this: the substance of the categories proceeds from another. And what proceeds from another shares the same genus. Therefore the substance of the categories shares the same genus as its source.

Continuing from this: the substance of the categories is of the same genus as that from which it proceeds. And it is a substance. Consequently its source is also a substance. This, then, is the substance that is more perfect than the one that sustains the categories, from which the latter arose.
(52) The substance of reason bears every sort of form. And what bears every sort of form is necessarily superior to and more rarefied than what bears some only. To this conclusion I shall now add: the substance that sustains the categories bears some forms only. Therefore the substance of reason is superior to and more rarefied than that of the categories.

(53) The substance of reason experiences timelessly. And whatever experiences timelessly is superior to and more rarefied than what experiences temporally. Therefore the substance of reason is superior to and more rarefied than what experiences temporally. To this conclusion I shall add the following: the substance that sustains the categories experiences temporally. Consequently the substance of reason is superior to and more rarefied than the substance of the categories.

If some substance had been identified that was superior to and more rarefied than that of the categories, the latter would not be immediately receptive of the primary Creator. But in fact the substance of reason is superior to and more rarefied than that of the categories. Therefore this latter is not directly receptive of the primary Creator.

Now the converse: if the substance that sustains the categories is directly receptive of the primary Creator, no substance will exist that is more rarefied and superior. But in fact the substance of reason is superior and more rarefied. Consequently the substance of the categories is not directly subject to the primary Creator.

10 Proofs 54-56

(54) The form present in the substance that bears the categories is in it accidentally. And whatever is in something accidentally is in its cause constitently. Therefore the form in the substance of the categories is present constitently in its cause. Now I shall premise this and state: the form that is in the substance of the categories accidentally is in its cause constitently. And whatever is present constitently in its cause is an accident particular to its cause. Consequently the form in the substance of the categories is an accident particular to its cause.
Next I shall premise this and subjoin another: no accident exists in the true being of the primary Creator. Therefore the form borne in the substance of the categories does not exist in the true being of the primary Creator. Now I shall premise this and assert: the form in the substance of the categories exists constitutively in its cause. Consequently the primary Creator is not the cause of this form by intrinsic activity. Accordingly some other substance is the cause of this form by intrinsic activity, and the form exists in it by reason of the creativity of the primary Creator.

(55) The primary Creator is the genesis of all. And whatever is the genesis of all has as its opposite their terminus. Hence the primary Creator has a terminus that is its opposite. Next I shall premise this and continue: the substance that sustains the categories is the ultimate of all. Therefore that substance is the terminus opposite the primary Creator. Now, then, I shall premise this and subjoin: whatever the terminus corresponding to a beginning may be, something intervenes between them. Consequently between the substance of the categories and the primary Creator something intervenes.

(56) Whatever has begun to exist was potential before existing. And whatever is potential before existing is actual after being potential. Therefore whatever has begun to exist is actual after being potential. Continuing, I shall premise this and state: whatever is potential before it existed is actual after being potential. And whatever is actual after being potential has exchanged potentiality for actuality. Hence whatever exists potentially after not existing at all has exchanged potentiality for actuality.

We shall now bring forth what this conclusion holds potentially and assert: the potentiality of being what it was not has been exchanged for actuality. And whatever has been transformed into something else belongs to the same genus as that reality into which it has been transformed. Hence potentiality belongs to the same genus as actuality.
Next we shall consider the following idea and propose: parts of the substance that sustains the categories are found in space after not being there; and it is found to be invested with a form after not being so. Now, whatever exists after not existing was potential. Therefore the substance that sustains the categories is said to be potential.

Again: the category-substance is said to be potential. And anything said to be potential requires some prior described as a necessity, since necessary is prior to potential. Therefore the category substance having been described as potential, something prior to it must be described as a necessity.

Again I shall take this as premise: the substance that sustains the categories having been described as potential requires a prior described as a necessity. Potential and necessary are however of the same genus, as has been pointed out. Therefore the substance of the categories belongs to the same genus as its prior.

Again by another sequence: a necessary substance is prior to a potential one. And the category substance is potential. Therefore a necessary substance is its prior. Again: a necessary substance is prior to that of the categories. Necessary substance is of the same genus as potential. Hence the substance that precedes that of the categories is of the same genus as the potential one. And the category substance is potential. Consequently the substance that precedes that of the categories is of the same genus as it.

11 The twofold proof of intermediate substance

The intermediate consists of more than one substance. Two ways to prove its existence: by comparison of the properties of the extremes, and by the effects of the intermediates on each other and on the substance of the categories. Application of syllogistic reasoning to divine considerations.

We have now set forth all possible proofs that the substance that sustains the categories is not immediately impelled by the primary Creator; and there is clearly some other intermediate substance between the primary Creator and the substance of the categories.

DISCIPLE Indeed, this has been fully demonstrated by the proofs you have proposed. But I wish you would put the foregoing teachings together and provide a general rule of inquiry into the procedure for discovering the intermediate substance between the primary Creator and the substance that supports the categories.
MASTER You must realize that the intermediate substance between the primary Creator and the substance of the categories is not single but multiple. Now, we can seek knowledge of these intervening substances in two ways. One is to consider the properties of the primary Creator and also those of the category-substance. This is how we have studied all proofs advanced up until now.

The second way is to investigate the presence of intermediate substances between the primary Creator and the substance of the categories in terms of their functions and activities and in the light of the emergence of their other potencies from the others. By their activities and functions I mean the configurations that appear in the substance of the categories received from the elemental substances together with the receptivities found in individual elemental substances, which are received from each other.

The difference between these two ways is that the first leads us to understand how to find the intermediate substance unequivocally between the primary Creator and the substance that sustains the categories, while the second enables us to understand what it is, of what sort, and why.

DISCIPLE I should like to be confirmed in the truth of the proofs we have devised in the first way before we begin to bring forth those of the second. And I wish to raise a question so that you may resolve an uncertainty that I have about it. I realize that all the terms of the propositions used in the proofs are precise, since they must be genera, species, differentiae, individua, propria or accidents; but I also know that none of these is applicable to the primary Creator. How, then, can the proofs you have brought forward be true?

MASTER Since our purpose in defining the terms of the propositions stated in the proofs was merely to identify them, and we already have gained through one of the modes some notion of the primary Creator although without precision: it was therefore not our task, since we had such knowledge, to try to define the terms of the propositions posited in the relevant proofs.
And yet the definitions predicated of the terms used in these proofs refer to the properties of the Creator itself, or to the works ascribed to it, or to the properties of inferior existents not ascribed to it. When we describe it by certain properties attributed to it, the proposition so constituted will be affirmative. When we withdraw from it some property not attributable to it, the proposition so constructed will be negative and will constitute among the proofs a true position.

Now if both premises of a syllogism are supernal (theologicae) or God-related, the affirmative or negative relation between them depends on the affirmativeness or negativity of each of the two terms in each figure. And if one proposition is supernal and the other not, the negative relation between them will depend on the two terms of the negative supernal proposition—negative I mean in the sense of withdrawing a non-supernal property from the blessed Lord—and their relation cannot be affirmative since God cannot be described by any non-supernal property.

12 The validity of supernal proof

DISCIPLE The import of what you say is that propositions are of two sorts, supernal and non-supernal. But I question whether a supernal proof is really a proof, since no genus, species or any of the other logical denominations are involved.

MASTER Now that you understand the relation of terms in a supernal proposition, although it is not the same as in a non-supernal one, nevertheless each resembles the other in sequence and arrangement, or in the position of the terms according to the rules of logical figures. Thus it is not inadmissible but on the contrary will be necessary to accept this as proof inasmuch as non-supernal proof is an assembling and ordering of true propositions in conformity with the rules of logical figures and supernal proof is exactly parallel.

Furthermore, the premises advanced in a supernal proposition are either primary (i.e. self-evident) or secondary. If primary, they are equal to the primary ones in a non-supernal proof.
If secondary, they must have been derived from the same source as those in the non-supernal proofs, and in that case will be equal. Hence supernal and non-supernal demonstration will be of equal validity. This being so, it is not inappropriate but is indeed essential to accept supernal proof as genuine demonstration.

**DISCIPLE** Why has some one said that in matters of divine wisdom there is no proof?

**MASTER** If the speaker meant that there is no proof of divine wisdom, he was mistaken; but if he meant that they do not make use of non-supernal proof in connection with divine wisdom, or proof that is based on logical terms, he was right and I cannot deny it.

### 13 The activity and effects of supreme universal cause

*The primary Creator is totally outgiving, and all inferior forms conform to this activity, while all parts of matter are receptive to them.*

**DISCIPLE** I am now convinced that an intermediary is to be discovered between the primary Creator and the substance that sustains the categories by the method of taking into account the properties of the primary Creator and also those of the substance of the categories. It is clear to me from the relevant proofs you brought forward, and these have resolved the doubt that I had. I am quite satisfied now that they are valid.

Now, therefore, please show me clearly the presence of an intermediate substance between the primary Creator and the substance that sustains the categories in accordance with their functions and activities and consistent with the emergence (of their potencies).

**MASTER** Do you admit as an indispensable requisite that things interact with each other?

**DISCIPLE** How can I not, since both outer evidence and inner reflection reveal it to be the case? But I am not aware of what such action is, nor how, nor why.
MASTER  As to the nature of this activity, it is one entity endowing another with its own form, when each of them lends itself to this. As to how, it is by combining, either without or with an intermediary; either with alteration and decrease of the active form or on the contrary with no decrease of the active quality; either by the timeless impress of the active potency on the receptive entity, or by thought and imagination, as by something loved on the one who loves.

But as to why this interaction of entities takes place, it is brought about by a supreme universal cause. Indeed, the potency that creates and impels all things creates as long as it finds receptivity to its act. Hence the universal form created by this potency must also act out of its own nature. It thus will be both creator and impeller.

In like manner, primary universal matter must also be intrinsically receptive of action. It is characteristic, however, of universals that their essential qualities are present in their parts. And if it is the case that the parts receive their essential qualities from their universal being, the parts also give to each other. This they must also consequently accept from their universals. And it is inescapable by reason of all this that forms are all active and matters all passive.

As for the reasoning with respect to form, it will be as follows: universal form is active by nature. And the parts of any by-nature active universal are themselves by nature active. Therefore the parts of universal form are by nature active.

On the other hand, the reasoning relative to matter is this: universal matter is receptive of the activity of form. All parts of any universal that is receptive of the activity of form are themselves receptive of that activity. Therefore all parts of universal matter are receptive of the activity of form.

DISCIPLE  Why is it taught that universal form is by nature active?

MASTER  Here is why: the supreme and holy primary Creator bestows lavishly what is its own, because indeed the whole of existence flows forth from it.
And since the primary Creator bestows the form that it harbors the flow is unrestrained and hence it is the fountainhead that encompasses, envelops and comprehends the whole of existence. For this reason all existing substances whatsoever must conform to its activity and emulate it in bestowing their forms and conferring their potencies as long as they can discover an appropriate receptive matter.

By the outflow of substances what is to be understood is a movement and inclination toward producing an activity that reflects the example of the primary Creator. But herein they differ as to perfection and imperfection because some flow in non-time and others in time; and the relation of any of the higher substances to their inferiors in producing a flow is comparable to the relation of the primary Creator to the higher and lower substances in flowing upon them, although their flow differs in each case.

In like fashion, the relation of the higher substances to the primary Creator in receiving from it parallels that of the lowers to the highers in receiving from them. All in all it was the primary efflux encompassing all substances that necessitated the reciprocal flow. As an example of this take the sun, which could pour forth its effulgence without mediation and emit its radiance only because subject to the primary Effulgence and conforming to it.

14 Some characteristics of form

Other causes of outflow are that form, being more rarefied than matter, readily penetrates it; it bestows itself on any appropriate matter. The nature of passive or receptive reality.

(The Master continues) If we ask ourselves why substances influence each other, we shall discover additional causes beyond these. One is that form is more rarefied than matter, and since what is rarefied penetrates and permeates whatever it encounters and confronts, that is precisely what form must do.

Furthermore, it is characteristic of form that it unites with matter when matter is suitable to receive it. And whatever unites with another that is suitable to receive it bestows itself and its form on that other. Hence form must bestow itself and its form on that which is suitable to receive it.
This is a very patent confirmation that form came forth from the primary Creator and conforms to that in being constrained by its own nature to bestow itself and confer its form if and when it discovers a receptive matter. Finally, since this was primary creation and primary act, this creation and this act necessarily were disseminated throughout everything until no further receptivity remained.

DISCIPLE I now understand what this act is and how and why. But just show me now how many passive realities there are.

MASTER Since the active reality is either matter or form, its act must resemble either itself and form or else form only; and the form must be a potency, a physical form or a motion. This being the case, you may take it that the passive reality is one of the following: a structured substance, a potency, a physical form, or a motion.

DISCIPLE I now understand from what you have explained that whatever possesses form acts for itself and for its species whenever it encounters a receptive matter.

15 **Characteristic activity of elemental substances**

*Elemental substances are necessarily active in imparting themselves and their forms, while physical substances are hindered from doing so by their own density and limitation. Elemental substances extend throughout the entire universe, and because of their rarity can permeate all things. An example is reason, and a much greater one is the power of God.*

MASTER If there are elemental substances other than the substance that sustains the categories, must they not act on their own and by their own forms?

DISCIPLE Indeed so, since once it is acknowledged that all existents impart their potencies and their radiation, the elemental substances must certainly do the same.

MASTER Quite so, and furthermore the matters and forms of these must impart themselves more completely than those of other substances because of their power, rarity and radiation. For we recognize that the more rarefied, powerful and radiant a substance is, the more forcible its act, and the more pervasive its effect in non-time.
DISCIPLE    What is the proof of this?

MASTER    The outflow comes from a stimulus and the stimulus in turn from a potency. Now the proof that potency and attenuation bring about the flow is this: quantity and shape do not impress their likeness on what they encounter that is ready to receive; and this is because of quantity’s weakness and density that hinder penetration. The same is true of accident, inasmuch as the more potent, attenuated and radiant it is, the better it penetrates.

What we shall conclude, therefore, from these six assertions is that elemental substances necessarily impart themselves and their forms. And in addition, the fact that the energies and irradiations emitted from body are spiritual is a proof, inasmuch as spiritual substances also must outflow.

Furthermore, if we recognize that physical substance is prevented from imparting itself by the density of quantity and its own darkness, nevertheless quantity does cast its semblance on confronting bodies sufficiently to give its form to a bright or shiny body that it may encounter. How much more likely it is then, in view of this, that spiritual substance untouched by quantity should give forth its form, its potency and its radiance!

---

115 The six assertions as identified by Brunner are:

1. The divine will creates as long as it finds receptivity (§ 13, p. 100, ¶ 2)
2. Universal form is the fountainhead of all existence (p. 101, ¶ 1)
3. Form by its rarity readily penetrates matter (p. 101, ¶ 14, ¶ 1)
4. It is characteristic of form that it combines with matter (p. 101, ¶ 14, ¶ 2)
5. The primary act was disseminated throughout all things (p. 102, ¶ 1)
6. The elemental substances impart themselves most completely because of their power, rarity and radiation (p. 102, § 15 ¶ 3)
DISCIPLE    How well you have confirmed the activity and penetrative power of the elemental substances!

MASTER    In the measure of their refinement, strength and superiority they lend themselves to activity and to imparting themselves and what is theirs. This is evident from the impenetrability of physical substances, since if you examine either one in the light of the other, each testifies to and proves the other. If, to be sure, you posit that [F 3.13] physical substance is prevented by its denseness and darkness from imparting itself—and the more free it is of denseness and darkness the more readily it will impart itself—you will thereby necessarily grant that it is the elemental substances that communicate themselves, their potencies and their forms. Indeed since it is quantity that obstructs any substance’s self-communication, there is consequently nothing to prevent the spiritual substances from giving their forms and bestowing their energies.

On the other hand, when you state that elemental substances impart themselves and their forms, you are of course conceding that physical substances are unable to do so. [F 3.14] And if you remember that the true being of elemental substance is illimitable and consider its potency and its ability to penetrate any receptive entity that it encounters and that is ready to receive it and then compare it with physical substance: you will discover that physical substance is incapable of ubiquity and only minimally able to penetrate anything; but you will find that elemental substance, which is the substance of the Universal Soul, extends throughout the entire universe and sustains this within itself because of its characteristic rarefaction and elementality; and so you will discover that the substance of Universal Reason permeates and spreads throughout the whole universe.

Now the basis of this is the rarity, potency and radiance of both these substances. It was because of this that the substance of reason could spread and permeate deep into all things. How much greater, then, in the light of this consideration, must be the power of holy God as it permeates all things, resides in all, and timelessly acts in all!
16 The source of the forms of the physical world

Elemental substances communicate their forms to the substance that supports the categories and thus become sense-known. Their act is neither completely physical nor completely spiritual. Bringing form from spiritual substance to physical matter is like the action of sunlight, which is imperceptible until it strikes a solid. Every form supported in universal matter exists elementally within will, which operates timelessly, motionlessly, free of instrument and free of space. In this way we shall know the spread of the primary power and act in all existents.

DISCIPLE At last I understand that every elemental substance imparts itself and bestows its form. But what is the consequence of this?

MASTER The sequent is that elemental substances impart themselves and bestow their forms on the substance that sustains the categories. Since every spiritual substance is self-activating, as we have explained (101,2), it is well-adapted for affecting whatever confronts it because of its outpouring of itself in which it surpasses all substances when it encounters a receptive subject. This is why an elemental substance proximate to a compound one must act on the latter as it is designed to do.

[F 3.15] Now, since this substance is a compound, sense-known body, the activity of spiritual substance in it must also be sense-known, except that such activity is neither wholly physical nor wholly spiritual, but lies between the two extremes as do for instance growth, sensation, movement, colors and shapes, which are brought about by elemental substances in compound ones. These activities are indeed neither wholly physical nor wholly spiritual, although they are sense-perceptible (see #34).

Therefore, in accordance with this teaching all sensible forms must occur in physical substance by the activity of a spiritual rational substance; they are sensible because the matter that receives them lies very near in its nature to corporeity; and they exist in spiritual rational substance more elementally than in matter.
As an example of this outflow or bringing down of form from spiritual elemental substance and of its action on physical matter, take sunlight that is poured into the atmosphere and passes through it but yet is imperceptible because of its rarity until it impinges on a solid body such as the earth. It is then that the light appears to sense observation, because it could not penetrate the earth’s constituents nor spread through them, but rather remained on the surface with a more unified presence and a more shining radiance.

Analogous to this, the irradiations of the elemental substances penetrate and flow to and from one another, but invisibly because of their ethereality and elementality; but when their radiance extends as far as physical matter, it then becomes visible and is revealed to sense because of the solidity of that matter.

In this way we shall raise ourselves up to the awareness that every form sustained in universal matter has its being within the reality of the potency that gives it forth, which is will, and its being is even more elemental than in the primary matter that receives it. And since the nature of primary matter differs from that of will, relative to which it is more like body, the activity of will in matter must be perceptible just as the activity of the rational substances in body is perceptible. Moreover, will must bring out what lies within it and impart this to matter, exactly as the rational substances bring out what lies within them and impart this to bodies, but with this exception: will acts with no foundation in time, motion, mediation or space, while the rational substances do exactly the opposite. It is for this reason that the elemental substances and all active substances in general do whatever they do in conformity with the primary activity that moves and permeates the universe.

In this way we shall come to understand the dissemination of the primary potency and the primary activity in all existents, since the energies of the elemental substances and of all existents in general enter into and spread throughout the universe entire.

How much more, then, the potency of the primary Creator, whose name is the Most High! This is why the primary Creator is said to be present in all existing things, and without him nothing can exist.
ACTIVITY OF THE INTERMEDIATE SUBSTANCES

17-24 Sixty-three proofs

Showing that forms in the substance of the categories are passive to the action of elemental and spiritual substances and originate in them.

17 Proofs 1-11

DISCIPLE It seems inevitable for proving and showing clearly by appropriate comprehensive proofs that the forms in the substance that sustains the categories are subject to the elemental substances and are derived from them.

MASTER You have quite rightly raised a point that is extremely useful. Here you have the proofs demonstrating that forms supported in physical substance are subject to elemental and spiritual substances and derive from them.

(1) The action of any elemental substance is elemental. And the activities present in the substance of the categories are elemental. Hence they are subject to elemental substance.

(2) The forms, potencies and motions found in physical substance are more elemental and more subtle than is that substance. And anything more elemental and subtle than physical substance approaches the domain of elemental substance. Hence the potencies, forms and motions in physical substance approach the domain of elemental substance.

Next I shall add to this the following: whatever lies within the nature of elemental substance must either belong to the nature of elemental substance or be one of its accidents. Therefore the potencies, forms and motions in physical substance belong either to the nature of elemental substance or to its accidents. But they are no part of the nature of elemental substance, not being substances. They are therefore counted among its accidents.
(3) Compound substance receives forms. And whatever receives forms gets them from what causes them in it. Therefore compound substance gets forms from what causes them in it. Next I shall subjoin this: elemental substance acts in compound substance. Consequently compound substance receives forms from elemental substance.

When something is received from another, what has been received is in its receptor subject to that from which it receives. Therefore the forms received by compound substance are subject to elemental substance. Now whatever in one thing is subject to another exists in that causative entity. Hence the forms that compound substance takes exist in their cause. And what causes them is an elemental substance. Therefore the forms that compound substance receives exist in elemental substance.

(4) The forms borne in physical substance represent an activity. And every act is performed in the sustained forms by an agency. Therefore the forms borne in physical substance are not produced by the substance that sustains the categories. To this I shall subjoin the following: whatever is not produced from a given source is produced from its contrary. Hence the form sustained in physical substance is produced from its contrary. Next I shall add the following: elemental substance is the contrary of compound. Therefore the forms in physical substance are produced from elemental substance.

(5) If compound substance does not acquire motions, potencies and shapes from elemental substance then this substance will either not exist or not be an agency. But elemental substance does exist and is an agency. Therefore compound substance does indeed acquire shapes, potencies and motions from elemental substance.

(6) The shapes, potencies and motions in compound substance are necessarily acquired from the primary Creator, or from the true being of the substance that sustains them, or from some other intermediate substance. If acquired from the primary Creator, some concordance would have been necessary between the primary Creator and the substance of the categories, since what existed in the Creator is now combined with that substance; and furthermore, there
would have to be multiplicity in the nature of the primary Creator because of the numerous shapes, potencies and motions. And both are impossible. So the shapes, potencies and motions in the substance of the categories are not obtained from the primary Creator.

If acquired from the substance that sustains them, that substance would have to be at once the creator of form and its recipient, and either creating while receiving, or not. If creating while receiving, one and the same entity would be creating and receiving, which is impossible. If not creating while receiving, it would then wholly receive form only from where substance was wholly formed. Therefore it cannot be noncreating where it is receiving.

But if the substance is not creating where it is receiving, and as creator is more powerful than as receptor, then the substance must be at one time more powerful than itself and at another weaker, if indeed it is one substance. If, however, it is not one, and is in part active and in part passive, then the passive part is necessarily deprived of form; yet the whole has been structured. It is consequently both structured and unstructured, which is incongruous.  

(7) When anything is a composite of two, each of the two can exist independently. But body is a composite of matter and form. Therefore form can exist independent of physical substance. Again I shall state: form can exist independent of physical substance. Form, however, does not exist unsupported. Therefore it is found in a sustainer that is not physical substance. Here I shall subjoin: apart from physical substance no sustainer exists other than elemental substance. Consequently, form is found in elemental substance.

---

116 Brunner finds implied here the conclusion that if the shapes, potencies and motions in compound substance derive neither from the primary Creator nor from the supporting substance, they must originate in an intermediate substance, as stated at the beginning of (6) above.
(8) [F 3.16] All activity takes place in the spiritual sphere, and all receptivity in the physical. And if a substance is active where it is passive, it will be at once spiritual and physical; and if partly active and partly passive, then it would be partly spiritual and partly physical. But the substance that sustains the categories is entirely physical. Consequently no part of it is active.

(9) If physical substance receives the forms it supports from some other substance, this must be superior to it. And elemental substance is superior to compound. Consequently physical substance receives its forms from elemental.

(10) Elemental substances are not discerned except in bodies. And forms in compound substance are not discerned except in bodies. Consequently the forms that are present in compound substance stem from those of elemental substances.

(11) The form that is sensed in compound substance is completing the existence of the latter. And whatever completes the existence of a substance is itself a substance. Hence the form perceived in compound substance is itself a substance.\(^{117}\)

18 Proofs 12-18

(12) Elemental substance divides into matter and form just as genus divides into species. And when anything divides as genus divides into species, its species are coequal in receiving the designation and definition of the genus. Therefore the species of elemental substance are coequal as to receiving the designation and definition of the genus.

To this I shall subjoin the following: matter and form are species of elemental substance. So they are coequal as to receiving the designation and definition of elemental substance. But elemental substance is designated and defined as substance. Consequently both matter and form are equal in their designation and definition as substance.

\(^{117}\) On form as substance see (2) and (12).
(13) Every effect is compound relative to its cause. But if physical forms are caused through spiritual ones, they ought to be compound. And they are indeed compound. Hence they are the effect of spiritual forms. Now whatever is caused exists in itself as an effect and in its cause as a potential. If the forms of compound substance are caused, then they must exist in themselves as an effect and in their cause as a potential. But they are in fact caused. Consequently in their cause they exist as a potential.

(14) Physical forms immersed in substance are united with it. And anything so united lacks the efficacy and perfection of elemental form. So form immersed in substance lacks the efficacy and perfection of elemental form. Now with this as preface I shall posit: whatever is less than another in efficacy and perfection resembles it. And so form immersed in substance resembles elemental form.

Having established this I shall now add: anything that resembles another is a likeness of it. Therefore forms immersed in substance are a likeness of spiritual forms. Next I shall add: whatever is a likeness of another is an image or portrayal of it. Consequently form immersed in substance is an image or portrayal of spiritual form.

(15) Forms are elemental. And the elemental is superior to the compound. Therefore forms are superior to what is constituted of them.

(16) All form borne in matter varies in brightness and perfection in accord with the gradations of brightness and perfection in the matter that receives it. And when anything varies in accord with the gradations of another, the quality of its form depends on that other. Therefore the spiritual form borne in matter depends on the diversity of the matter to which it conforms. To this I shall subjoin: any form that is dependent on another is not actually a form in its own right. Next following this: whatever is not present in something in its own right is dependent on another that does exist in something in its own right. Consequently the form borne in matter is dependent on another that exists in something as genuine form.
(17) [F 3.17] Every spiritual substance is endowed with form; and every such form is ethereal (subtilis). And the form of all ethereality radiates from it. Therefore the form of spiritual substance radiates from it. Following on this: the form of spiritual substance radiates from it. And when the form of anything radiates from it, that form is reflected by the contrary that receives it. Consequently the form of spiritual substance is reflected by its receptive contrary.

To this conclusion I shall subjoin: whatever form is reflected from its receptor permeates and envelops it when its own substance is ethereal. And so the form of spiritual substance permeates and envelops the substance that bears the categories.

Next I shall add: the form of spiritual substance permeates and envelops the substance of the categories. And the form sustained in the substance of the categories permeates and envelops that substance. Consequently the form borne in the substance of the categories is the very form of spiritual substance.

(18) Every physical substance is by nature enclosed within bounds. And what is so enclosed cannot expand to occupy all space. Therefore physical substance by nature cannot expand to occupy all space. Now the converse of this: spiritual substance is not limited by nature, since it has no quantity nor boundary. And what is not by nature enclosed within bounds expands and occupies all space. Therefore the nature of spiritual substance is to expand and occupy all space.

Next I shall proceed from this conclusion and posit: whatever expands is fluent, not inert. So spiritual substance is fluent, not inert. Next I shall state: spiritual substance is fluent, not static. And the form of what is in motion and not quiet is arrested when it encounters a physical obstacle from which its form and activity rebound as does sunlight reflected from some object.

Thus the form of spiritual substance is arrested and rebounds from the object. Next I shall add: the form sustained in physical substance comes to rest at that point and is reflected from it. Consequently the form sustained in physical substance is the form that springs from spiritual substance.
Whatever comes from one thing and is reflected in another has the property of suffusing the surface in which it is reflected, concealing it from view. And the form sustained in compound substance suffuses its surface and conceals it from view. Thus the form sustained in compound substance is reflected in it from some other substance. To this I shall subjoin: whatever in one object is the reflection of another exists in that from which it springs. Therefore the form sustained in compound substance exists in the substance from which it springs.

**19 Proofs 19-25**

(19) Whatever patterns and shapes appear in compound substance are executed by their cause. And elemental substance is the cause of compound. Hence any designs and shapes that appear in compound substance are executed by elemental substance. Next in order I shall subjoin: whatever is executed by something in another exists in what executes it. Therefore any designs and shapes that appear in compound substance exist in what executes them. Next I shall add: it is elemental substance that executes the designs and shapes. Consequently they exist in elemental substance.

(20) The shapes, colors and designs brought about in particular compounds\(^{118}\) are created by a substance that is active. The substance that supports the form of the elements is not active. Hence the shapes, colors and designs in particular compounds are not created by the substance that sustains the form of the elements. Therefore they are caused by an elemental substance.

These activities are caused either by the true being of an elemental substance or not by it. If not by its true being, then possibly they are caused by its inactivity. But this is impossible. Hence it is impossible for them to be caused by its nonbeing. If, however, they are caused by its true being, then they must exist within its true being.

---

\(^{118}\) Particular compounds: the various animals, plants and minerals composed of the four elements
The same may be pointed out in connection with the universal shapes and designs that are brought about in compound substance: they are existent in the true being of the substance that executes them.

(21) The one is the ground of multiplicity. Elemental substance is one. Hence elemental substance is the ground of multiplicity. The forms sustained in compound substances are multiple. Therefore elemental substance is the ground of the forms sustained in compound substance.

(22) A multiple is an aggregate of units; aggregated units divide into ones as a whole divides into parts. And when anything is divided, the quality of the whole is present in each of its parts. Now the ones are parts of the multiple. Hence the quality of the multiple is present in the individual units. And the forms sustained in compound substance are a multiple. Therefore the forms in compound substance exist in a unitary form. But the form of elemental substance is unitary. So the forms in compound substance are present in the form of elemental substance.

(23) Elemental substance has more similarity to the one than does compound; also, the form in compound substance has more similarity to the one than does compound substance itself. Therefore elemental substance bears a resemblance to the form present in compound substance, since both are more similar to the one. And all similars are alike in genus, species, accident or quality. But form is not of the same genus or species as elemental substance, and the true being of elemental substance lacks accident. Thus their resemblance does not derive from these. It consists therefore in their mode of acting.

(24) Quantity and quality both are forms. But all form derives from form. Therefore quantity and quality are not caused by the substance that supports them. Again: quantity and quality derive from form. But apart from substance as compound or elemental, there is no form. Therefore quantity and quality are a product of elemental substance.
(25) Quantity is a multiplicity, and a multiplicity consists of units. Hence quantity consists of units. Units, however, are composed from the elemental one. Thus quantity is composed from the elemental one. But the elemental one exists within elemental substance. Therefore quantity is composed from the one of elemental substance.

The one of elemental substance is an elemental accident. And any compound accident is composed from elemental accident. Therefore compound accident is composed from the one of elemental substance.

Again, quantity is constituted of units. And compounded units are a compound accident. Hence quantity is a compound accident. To this I shall subjoin: compound accident is constituted of the one of elemental substance. Therefore quantity is constituted of the one of elemental substance.

20 Proofs 26-27

(26) I shall show that the properties and imprints of elemental substance are present in the form that is sustained in compound substance. Here is the evidence:

Elemental substance is perceived only in body, as is form.

Elemental substance is of itself a unity and elemental, as is form.

Elemental substance is the form of compound substance, as is form.

Elemental substance completes that of which it is the form, as does form.

Elemental substance permeates compound substance, as does form.

Elemental substance encompasses compound substance, as does form.

Elemental substance distinguishes between its own substratum and another, and form also distinguishes between compound substance and another.

Elemental substance is nonspatial, as is form.

Elemental substance moves and acts, as does form.\(^\text{119}\)

\(^{119}\) See proofs 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23; 22 of the first series; and III,19; II, 23; IV,11 and III,16.
Next I shall take this proposition as premise and posit that the properties and imprints of elemental substance are present in the form sustained in compound substance; and wherever the properties of elemental substance are found, that imprint is from elemental substance. Therefore the form that subsists in compound substance has been impressed from elemental substance.

Again by an alternative sequence: if the properties and imprints of elemental substance are found in the form sustained in compound substance, then this form must imprint such properties in the manner of elemental substance.

Similarly we shall clearly prepare propositions on each property of elemental substance and on the properties of form and will add argumentation leading to the conclusion that form exists by reason of the imprint of elemental substance. The number of arguments adduced will therefore coincide with the number of properties on which the propositions are based.

(27) When any two substances of contrary nature unite, a form results from their union that differs from the forms proper to their own substances. That this is true is evident to sense-observation, but rationally it will be shown as follows:

I assert that the forms of two substances that are united are two. Now the characteristics of a two differ from those of a one. Thus the characteristics of the two forms that belong to the two united substances differ from those of each one individually. Again by another sequence: all contraries when they unite become one something. But the two differ from the one. Therefore all twos when they unite become something different from the one. Then I shall add to this conclusion: two forms unite. Therefore when they unite, they become something different from either one of them. Again by another process: the form produced by the coalescence of the two must be one of them or neither. And it cannot be one alone, since a form cannot disappear. Consequently the form differs from each of them and is not either one.
Since the proposition that from the coalescence of two substances of contrary nature a form originates that differs from either of them singly has been confirmed, let us now verify another one: that elemental substance unites with compound. This is manifestly true with regard to sense observation, since we observe the designs of nature and of the soul in any substance constituted of them (cf. #43). This establishes the merging and union of these substances, but proof with regard to reason will be made as follows:

Elemental substance belongs to the same genus as compound. And everything belonging to the same genus can unite. Hence elemental and compound substances can unite. Again by another reasoning: elemental substance is active. And any activator unites with that which receives its act. Therefore any elemental substance unites with that which receives its act.

Next I shall take this as premise and add: but compound substance receives the act of elemental substance. Hence any of the elemental substances can unite with compound substance. Again by a different reasoning: the form of elemental substance necessarily outflows (see proof 17). And whatever necessarily outflows unites with what it encounters. Therefore the form of elemental substance unites with what it encounters. To this premise I shall add: compound substance is encountered by elemental. Therefore the form of the elemental unites with the substance of the compound. Again by a different route: Elemental substance embraces compound. And whatever embraces another is united with what it embraces. Consequently elemental substance is united with compound.

Again by another process: elemental substance is by nature unbounded. And whatever is unbounded is extensive. Hence elemental substance is extensive. And I append to this conclusion: all that is by nature extensive is by nature omnipresent. Thus elemental substance is by nature omnipresent. And whatever is by nature omnipresent is united with all that space includes. Consequently elemental substance is by nature united with all that space includes. But compound substance is all that space includes. Thus elemental substance is by nature united with the true being of compound substance.
Finally a different proof: elemental substance has a propensity for the realization of its potential. Now, everything that has this propensity produces its effect in some subject. Hence the effect of elemental substance appears in some subject. And that whose effect appears in some subject is at one with it. Therefore elemental substance is at one with the subject of its act. But compound substance is the subject of its act. Consequently elemental substance is united with compound.

Now having proved that elemental and compound substances are united, I shall take that as premise and add: when any two unite, from their union a form results that differs from that of either one. It is this proposition that we have already shown to be true (proof 27). Therefore from the merging of elemental and compound substances a form arises that is different from that of either one of them.

I shall then subjoin: the shapes, potencies and motions found in compound substance are forms that are different from the previous true being of elemental and of compound substance. Therefore it is from the merging of elemental and compound substance that shapes, potencies and motions arise that are found in compound substance.

21 Proofs 28-29

(28) The forms present in compound substance emerge into actuality and become evident to sense. And when any elemental substance unites with a compound one, the forms judged to be in it will emerge from potentiality to actuality and become evident to sense. Therefore the forms present in compound substance emerge into actuality and become evident to sense when elemental and compound substances unite.

(29) Every physical substance is sense-perceptible. And whatever imprints are present in anything sensible are perceptible. Therefore all imprints present in every physical substance are perceptible.

Again, the imprints of elemental substances are present in physical substance. But all imprints in physical substance are perceptible. Therefore all imprints of elemental substance in compound are perceptible. I shall now convert this and create the proposition: whatever is perceptible in physical substance is an imprint of elemental substance.
All forms in physical substance are perceptible. And anything perceptible in physical substance is an imprint of elemental substance. Therefore all forms in compound substance are imprints of elemental substance.

22  Proofs 30-39

(30) Compound substance has been caused. And all forms that appear in any effect have been imprinted by their cause. Hence all forms and imprints that appear in compound substance have been impressed in it by their cause. Now elemental substance is the cause of compound. Thus all forms and imprints that appear in compound substance have been impressed by elemental substance (proof 19).

(31) The form of every effect exists in its cause. But elemental substances are the causes of compound ones. Therefore the forms of compound substances exist in elemental ones.

(32) Elemental substance is the efficient cause of compound (proof 2, first series). And whatever is the efficient cause of something else imprints in it that which exists in its own nature. Hence elemental substance imprints in compound that which exists in its own nature. With this as premise I shall propose: elemental substance imprints in compound that which exists in its own nature. And what elemental substance imprints in compound are shapes, potencies and motions. Consequently shapes, potencies and motions exist in elemental substance.

(33) Motion is an imprint of the soul. And motion is found in compound substance. Therefore the imprint of the soul is present in compound substance.

(34) What is imperfect has been created by what is perfect (proof 51, first series). And compound substance has been diminished from elemental. Therefore compound substance has been created by elemental.

(35) The soul moves. And what moves is the cause of what is immobile (proof 40, 1st series). Hence the soul is the cause of what is immobile. But compound substance is immobile.
Consequently the soul is the cause of compound substance. Now compound substance and the form borne in it are found together. Therefore the soul is at once the cause of compound substance and of the form it bears.

(36) Any physical substance is receptive only and is compound only, whereas spiritual substance both receives and acts, being elemental in a certain way and compound in a certain way (proof 8). Now what acts and receives and is elemental and compound is receptive of many forms. And what receives many forms has such forms potentially within itself (proofs 29 and 52, first series). Therefore many forms exist potentially in elemental substance. And when many forms exist potentially in anything, that entity releases them from potentiality to actuality. Consequently elemental substance brings forth the forms existing within it from potentiality to actuality.

(37) Every cause must necessarily imprint its shapes and forms on its effect. And what receives an impress is never the equivalent in strength and perfection of that by which it is impressed. Hence a cause must of necessity possess more shapes and forms than its effect. And elemental substance causes compound. Therefore elemental substance necessarily possesses more abundant shapes and forms than does compound.

Again by another sequence: compound substance is the product of elemental. And a product possesses less abundant shapes and forms than its cause. Hence compound substance possesses less abundant shapes and forms than does elemental. Also by a different ordering: if elemental substance had only a single shape and form, its product would have more. But a product has no more forms and shapes than its cause. Therefore elemental substance does not have only a single shape and a single form.

Whatever does not have one shape only to retain it can be shaped by all. And whatever is shaped by all contains all within its own true being. Now elemental substance is shaped by all. Therefore all form exists within the true being of elemental substance.
Whatever can receive multiple forms has no one appropriate form of its own. And elemental substance, like the Soul, Reason, Nature and Matter, accepts multiple forms. Therefore none of them is confined to a single form that is appropriate to it alone.

(39) Spiritual elemental substance is better suited to accumulate multiple forms than is compound physical substance. And physical substance and shape accumulate many forms and shapes.

23 Proofs 40-45

(40) Whatever is perceived as an actuality in anything existed as a potentiality before it emerged into actuality. And the forms that exist in compound substance are actual. Therefore they existed potentially before they emerged into actuality.

(41) The universal soul that includes the potencies of the soul is better suited to sustain multiple forms than is any of its potencies. And of the potencies of the soul, that of sight sustains multiple forms. Therefore the universal soul is better suited to sustain multiple forms than is the visual potency.

If sense is a potency that gathers perceptible forms, then the soul ought to be a substance that assembles the entirety of forms. And the sense potency does gather perceptible forms. Consequently the soul does assemble the entirety of forms.

The more elemental and rarefied any substance is, the more forms it can accumulate, as in the case of the soul, reason and primary matter. And the substance of the soul is indeed more rarefied and more elemental than is compound substance. Therefore the soul does accumulate more forms than does compound substance.

---

120 Conclusion missing, but see #33, proof 10.
121 Including the rational ones (Brunner).
In any substance that can accumulate the entirety of forms, all exist in its true being elementally (i.e. free of matter), exactly as matter, reason and the soul accumulate all forms sustained in compound substance. Therefore all forms exist within the true being of the soul.

(42) If reason can apprehend the spirituality of things, then such apprehension is achieved through similarity. Hence it is similar to the potency of anything at all. And being similar to the potency of all things, its form contains all. The same is true of the soul.

(43) [F 3.19] Reason and the soul are cognizant of all things. And cognizance is the subsistence of the form of the known thing within the soul and reason. Thus the forms of all things subsist within the soul and the reason. And the forms subsist therein by union. Hence all forms are united with reason and the soul. And union takes place because of likeness. Therefore all forms bear resemblance to reason and the soul.

(44) Reason and the soul interpret knowledge from the forms of things. And whatever interprets anything does so by means of its form. Hence reason and the soul interpret the forms of things by their own, and their understanding of such forms comes from the union of their forms with those of the things. Thus reason and the soul unite their forms with those of the things. But all things that unite are similar. Therefore the forms of reason and the soul are similar to the forms of things.

(45) [F 3.20] Perceptible realities exist within the soul elementally, since their forms are present without their matters. Similarly the forms of things exist in the reason more elementally and in a more general way. Hence lower forms must all be present in higher ones by advancing degrees until that universal form is attained within which lies the totality of all forms; except that the higher ones are not in space while the lower ones truly are. The former are united in a union of spiritual substance while the latter are dispersed in the diffusion of physical substance.
24 Proofs 46-63

(46) The [sensing] soul perceives sensate forms with no cognizance of their substrate matters. This takes place because the existence of matter is outside the true being of the soul, while forms are within it. Hence with this antecedent I shall state: if the soul has no cognizance of the matter that sustains forms because of its extraneousness, then what it does perceive must be the forms, which exist within its own true being. And the soul does not have cognizance of matter, which is alien to its own true being. Hence it perceives the forms, since they exist within its true being.

(47) If sensate forms did not resemble the soul, it would not receive them nor would they subsist in it. (Proof 41) But the soul does receive them and they do subsist in it. Therefore they do resemble it.

(48) The sensate forms present in compound substance exist in the soul elementally, which means that in it they are free of their matters. In the reason they exist similarly but even more elementally. But the substance of the soul is superior to that which sustains sensible forms. From this it follows that inferior forms must exist in superior substances. (Proof 45)

(49) The forms in compound substance are actually perceptible to the soul. And whatever exists actually had previous existence potentially. Therefore the forms actually present in compound substance had previous potential existence in the soul. And whatever exists potentially is spiritual relative to what exists actually. Consequently the forms present in the soul potentially are spiritual relative to those in existence actually. But the forms sustained in compound substance are actual. Therefore the forms that exist potentially in the soul are spiritual relative to those in compound substance.

122 Cf. Aristotle, On the Soul, II,12, 424a 17. (AJ)

NOTE (1): Here and in the ensuing discussion, what is said of “the soul” applies ambiguously to Universal Soul and the individual (particular) soul. I have therefore left “soul” uncapitalized in most occurrences. (See I,8 for the astonishing capacities of the individual soul. See also the correspondence of particular and universal soul in Proof 51 and in III, 26 below.) (LL)

NOTE (2): Here and in III, 37-42, the context suggests that where Gabirol says “soul” in its perceptive capacity the application is specifically to the sensing soul. Accordingly, Jacob translates anima as “sensing principle” throughout this whole part of the exposition. But as the Latin anima is not so specific, I (like Wedeck) render it simply as “soul,” and allow the reader to refine the sense implicitly. (LL)
(50) If the substance of reason and of the soul disjoin the forms borne in compound substance and retain them within themselves free of their supporting substance, these forms must exist within the true being of each. And the soul and reason do disjoin the forms borne in compound substance. Therefore they do exist within the true being of each.

(51) If a particular form supported in particular matter subsists in the substance of the particular soul free of its sustaining matter, then also the universal form borne in universal matter, which is the form borne in compound substance, must be sustained in the substance of the universal soul free of universal matter, which is the compound substance that sustains it. The same is true of the forms of the universal soul that are sustained in another yet superior substance, until the primary substance that sustains all things is reached; for whatever is true of particular form will also be true of universal.

(52) If everything possesses spiritual matter and spiritual form, then these should be identifiable in everything; and if so, spiritual matter should be present in each physical substance and spiritual form in each physical form. Therefore spiritual color and shape should be present in physical color and shape; and spiritual color and shape should subsist in spiritual substance.

(53) Physical forms descend from spiritual ones, and whatever comes down from anything is a semblance of that from which it springs. Thus physical forms are a semblance of spiritual ones.

(54) Whatever issues from some source converges more when closer to its source but disperses more when farther away. But sensible forms converge more in spiritual substances and disperse in physical ones. Therefore sensible forms are derived from spiritual substances and are closer to their source in spiritual than in physical substance.

---

123 Particular beings are the minerals, plants and animals composed of the elements.
(55) Forms dispersed in physical substances converge in spiritual ones. And whatever is dispersed in anything converges at its source. And so spiritual substances are the source of forms dispersed in physical substances.

(56) Spiritual substances aggregate sensible forms. And every source aggregates that of which it is the source. Therefore spiritual substances are the source of sensible forms.

(57) Whatever is derived from some source converges near its point of origin. And sensible forms converge in spiritual substances. Therefore sense forms are derived from spiritual substances.

(58) Sense forms converge. And whatever issues from a source converges. Hence sense forms issue from a source. And whatever comes forth from a source converges near its source. Thus sense forms converge near their source. And sense forms converge near spiritual substances. Therefore spiritual substances are the origin of sensible forms.

(59) Whatever is the source of anything is joined with it in an intrinsic union. And sensible forms are joined with spiritual ones in an intrinsic union. Therefore spiritual substances are the source of sensible forms.

(60) Sensible forms are joined with spiritual substances in an intrinsic union. And any existent in which things join in an intrinsic union is their source. Therefore spiritual substances are the source of sensible forms.

(61) An elemental substance, for instance the soul or reason, perceives of and by itself the true beings of sensible forms. And whatever of itself perceives the true being of another is intrinsically joined with that other. Hence the true being of elemental substances is joined with that of sensible forms.

Now taking this as premise: the true beings of elemental substances and sensible forms are united. And when any two natures unite, they are as if one. Therefore the true being of elemental substances and that of sensible substances are one.
Taking this as premise, I shall assert: the true being of elemental substance and of sensible forms is one. And the true being of anything that outflows from another is at one with that from which it flows. Therefore sensible forms outflow from the true being of elemental substances.

(62) The unity of the forms of things is much greater in the form of reason than in others. And whatever originates in a certain source is more unified in proximity to its source than farther away from it. Therefore the form of reason is the source of the aggregate of all forms.

(63) Every form created by the soul in any matter comes into being only if it has previous spiritual existence in the soul, and it is because of these spiritual forms that physical ones have existence. It is the soul that creates the physical forms and shapes that are sustained in matter. Therefore these forms and shapes exist within the soul spiritually.

25 How can sensate forms be held in elemental substance?

Since it is elemental substance that imprints these forms, they must lie within it, albeit in a different and more rarefied way. When elemental forms join with physical substance, a different kind of form arises, as when sunlight strikes matter objects.

MASTER We have now propounded as far as possible the proofs confirming that the forms borne in compound substance are impressed in it from a superior elemental substance; and some of them have shown that these forms exist within the true being of the elemental substance that imprints them and that they outflow and come forth from that substance.

This has been shown by synthesis; and in addition we shall shortly make it clear by analysis, by resolving the imprints present in compound substance and ascertaining through each of them the elemental substance that peculiarly stamps it. Once we have done this we shall know how many related elemental substances imprint on compound substance its designs and shapes.
DISCIPLE  Throughout the whole compilation of proofs that you have brought forth you have asserted that the sense-perceptible forms sustained in compound substance have existence within the true being of the elemental substance that imprints them. You have also taught that these forms are assembled within the true being of the soul and the reason from which they flow forth, and you provided as proof of this the soul’s and reason’s apprehension of all these forms.

Please show me, therefore, how sensate forms such as continuous quantity, shape, color and the primary qualities can be held within the true being of elemental substance, and how it is that elemental substance’s apprehension of all these forms becomes proof that they are gathered and subsist within it. As far as I am concerned, nothing is more nonsensical than to say that the forms of this sense-known universe, great and myriad as they are, exist within the substance of the soul and of reason. Please just bring some light to bear on this for me as best you can.

MASTER  Are you convinced by the preceding proofs that sense-known forms are imprinted by elemental substance?

DISCIPLE  Yes, I certainly am.

MASTER  Since it is this substance that imprints these forms, it must imprint either just what lies within its own true being, or what lies within its true being and also that of compound substance, or else what does not exist within it. But it does not imprint what does not exist within it, because if it did it would not truly imprint, since imprinting means endowing the recipient with what is within its own true being. Again, if elementary substance impressed what has no existence within its own true being, its act could not be an impress; rather it would be creating from nothing. But what creates from nothing is the primary Creator alone, the High, the Holy.

---

DISCIPLE  Then let elemental substance imprint that which lies within compound substance.

MASTER  The true being of compound substance is without form, which is why it is imprinted from elemental substance. If it had form, it would either receive it or not. In the event of such reception, and in view of the impossibility of receiving from itself, it must receive from another. If there is no such reception, then the form and its own true being would be identical, in which case form would be substance itself, and substance form, which is untenable. All in all, substance was already subject and receptive, and before form’s presence in it had only the possibility of receiving this from some other source. In this way the thesis is also refuted that elemental substance imprints that which lies within its own nature and also in that of compound substance.

Now since the postulation that elemental substance imprints what does not lie within its own nature has been refuted, as has also that elemental substance imprints what is within its own nature and also within compound substance, this proof will make it inevitable for you to say that elemental substance imprints only what it holds within its own nature.

DISCIPLE  Please realize that even if this proof obliges me to concede that sense-perceptible forms exist within the true being of elemental substance, this does not compel me to admit that they exist there in the same mode as in compound substance.

MASTER  The form of quantity, shape, color and the four qualities cannot exist in elemental substance in the same mode as in compound; because it would follow that elemental substance would be similar in form to compound substance; but these forms exist in elemental substance in a very different, more elemental and more rarefied way. They exist as if separated from their matter, perceived by the soul but divested of their substances. Indeed such forms are more ethereal and more elemental than those that are sustained in their matters because of being borne in the very intrinsicality of the soul and stripped of physical matter. (See proof 46)
Now because these elemental forms possess necessarily outflowing energies, proof of which has already been given,\textsuperscript{125} when they spread themselves over their confronting substance and combine with it, from their permeation and coalescence perceptible forms are generated that are sustained in compound substance. What causes these sense-known forms is their union with physical substance. This is why they differ from the elemental forms sustained in elemental substance. And just as when elemental bodies are joined with elemental substances to become a form that differs from that of either one of them, so when elemental and compound substances are brought together they become through their union a form that is different from those of either one of them. This is comparable to the union of sunlight with objects of varying composition and color, since their combination produces luminescences that differ from the sunlight and from each other.

\textbf{26 The inclusiveness of the higher forms}

The individual sensing soul is capable of vast perceptions, and the universal soul much more so. Forms of higher substance are increasingly unitary and nonspatial, while the opposite is true of those that occupy lower substance. Ultimately, universal reason is reached, which sustains all form.

DISCIPLE How is it possible for me to imagine that this great outspreading sense form sustained in physical substance could exist in elemental substance?

MASTER You need not wonder at that, because if a particular elemental substance such as the individual soul can perceive universal compound substance and the whole of its form and establish it within its own true being, how much more certainly must universal elemental substance, which is the universal perceptive principle, comprehend compound substance and the whole of its form!

\textsuperscript{125} See III, 16, p. 106; III, 18, proof 17 and 18; III, 20, p.117.
But I understand that all forms of compound substance, however great and outspreading, are as it were merely an irreducible dot compared to the form of elemental substance. Hence if this vast form can be held within an irreducible part of elemental universal substance, that is, within the individual soul, then its containment in elemental universal substance or the universal soul need not seem strange. In other words, just as the forms of perceptible realities exist in the substance of the universal soul elementally or without their matters, so also it need not seem strange that these forms should be held in an elemental universal substance that is superior to it, or the substance of reason; for clearly the forms of all things exist more generally and more elementally in the substance of reason.

In fact, the forms that inhabit higher substance will be more unitary and nonspatial, and conversely those that occupy lower substance will be more widespread and spatial. This is the consequence of the essential unitariness of the elemental substances and the essential diffusion of physical substance.

The lower forms are wholly encompassed by the higher ones until all are resolved into primary universal form, which gathers within itself all forms and within which all are encompassed. In this way the form of universal reason sustains all forms and all subsist within it, as I shall make clear in due course when we consider the nature of the form of reason and how it can encompass all forms.\(^\text{126}\)

\(^{126}\) IV, 2, end; IV, 12; V, 4-7 and 16-19.
27 Correspondence between higher and lower genera

For every genus of existents at the lower extreme a corresponding one is present at the higher. Thus it is clear that the forms of compound substance outflow from those of elemental substance.

DISCIPLE It is certainly obvious to me from these teachings that tangible forms exist within rational ones. But what perplexes me is this: if all physical forms exist within spiritual ones more elementally than in physical substance and [F 3.21] the lower is a counterpart of the higher and exists within it, how can the ten physical categories exist within spiritual substance? 127

MASTER Just scrutinize the lowest extreme of existence, I mean each one of the categories of existents that occupy the lowest extreme; and similarly examine the highest extreme of existence and you will discover that for each category of existents at the lowest extreme there is a corresponding opposite at the highest. You will find universal matter to be the analog of substance, quantity the analog of the form of reason, as has already been made clear, 128 and correlative you will also find it analogous to all successive unities borne in the forms of substance. Similarly, you will also find that its seven elemental species are analogous to the sevenfold of elemental substances, which are these: Matter, Form, Reason, the (three) Souls (rational, animal/sensing, and vegetal/vital), and Nature, as well as to a number of the potencies of each one of these substances.

You will find that quality is the analog of the differentiae and forms of these substances; relation their analog as cause and effect; time the analog of eternity; place the analog of antecedent or sequent ordering; position the analog of (manner of) existence; action the analog of the impressing, bestowing and creativity of these substances; passivity the analog of being impressed by and receptive to them; and possession the analog of the presence of universal form in universal matter, and the presence of each form of elemental substance in the matter that sustains it; and also the analog of the presence of the individual potencies of each one of these substances.

Now do you not understand from these additional factors that I have provided in the analogies between the forms of compound substance and those of elemental substance that the forms of compound substance are shown to issue from the forms of elemental substance?

127 Aristotle, Categories, iv ff.

128 II, 22; III, 20, proofs 24 and 25.
28 The [Sensing] Soul’s and Reason’s perception of forms

The soul and reason perceive sensate forms that reside within them potentially and become perceptible when they issue into actuality and become forms of body; and reason more so because it is more elemental and spiritual.

[NOTE: In the 1987 version, Jacob rendered anima as “sensing principle” in this and the succeeding sections. Later, in III, 48, Gabirol will differentiate among the three “souls” – the vegetal/vital, the animal/sensing, and the rational, corresponding to three faculties of the human psyche as well as to three divisions in the taxonomy of natural beings – all of which is basic to the Platonic-Aristotelian view of reality. It is a fine line to draw, whether to take the anima of the following discussion to refer to the soul generally or to the “sensing soul” in particular. I therefore render it “soul” and leave it to the reader’s interpretation. –LL]

DISCIPLE This indeed is proof of what you have stated, and I can imagine much more clearly the existence of physical forms in elemental substances because of your having explained that [F 3.22] these forms are embodied and come into being in this way because of their contact with physical substance. In fact they are like a sheer, translucent white kerchief that when laid over some black or crimson object takes on its color and changes relative to sense perception but not at all in itself.

But please show me how reason’s and the soul’s perception of sensate forms becomes evidence that such forms exist essentially in them and outflow or are drawn down from them.

MASTER Do you concede that the substance of the soul and of reason is elemental and perceives all forms? Or do you not?

DISCIPLE It must do so.

MASTER And that the elemental substance that perceives all forms does so either of and by itself or not by itself?

DISCIPLE That is true.

MASTER If elemental substance were said not to perceive all forms by itself, this would mean that it did not perceive them at all times.

DISCIPLE We understand that the soul does not perceive sense objects at all times and in all ways. Sometimes it does and sometimes not, and not in every case.
MASTER  The soul is never at any time prevented from self-perception of forms, unless by existents other than those by which it perceives them. Proof of this is that if the soul could at any time be prevented from such perception, then it could never perceive of and by itself. It would then be self-perceiving and at the same time not self-perceiving, which is inconsistent.

Here is the proof: the soul cannot at once and of itself both perceive and not perceive forms. But it does so perceive them. Therefore it cannot of itself not-perceive them. I shall subjoin this: the soul is said to be prevented from perceiving forms. The conclusion will therefore be: the soul is not prevented from perceiving forms of and by itself. It is therefore clear that the soul does perceive forms of and by itself.

DISCIPLE  If the soul perceives forms by itself, they should always be actually within it. But they are not always actually in it. Therefore it does not perceive them by itself.

MASTER  If forms were actually present in the soul, they would be always perceptible. But the soul’s perception of forms by itself does not require their being actually within it, since it is possible that they are there potentially, and subsequently it may perceive them by itself once they emerge into actuality.

DISCIPLE  But how is it possible for forms to be present in the true being of the soul potentially and afterward be there actually?

MASTER  Why not, since it takes place at two different times?

DISCIPLE  If the forms are present within the true being of the soul potentially, how then can it act on them and impress them?

MASTER  The forms that are in the true being of the soul are not the ones on which it acts, but rather it is those in body that act on the soul. There is no obstacle to this, inasmuch as they are different forms.

DISCIPLE  Well, then, if the forms are in the soul, why does it not perceive them without any organ of perception, exactly as does reason?
MASTER The forms in the soul are not the ones sustained in bodies, since these are actually corporeal. It is for this reason that the soul requires some sense organ for their perception. But in fact not even reason apprehends all realities without some organ since for discernment of palpable forms it must have one.

DISCIPLE You have compelled me to concede that the soul perceives forms of and by itself. But what can you say of reason?

MASTER If the soul can perceive forms of and by itself because of its elementality and spirituality, then how much better must reason do so! Because the substance of reason is much more elemental and spiritual than that of the soul, and consequently it knows all things of and by itself.

29, 30 Proofs that all forms are present in elemental substance

29 Proofs 1-4

DISCIPLE It is now clear to me from everything you have told me that elemental substance perceives all forms of and by itself. But what is the consequence of this?

MASTER The consequence is that forms exist within its true being.

DISCIPLE What is the process of reasoning for this?

MASTER It runs as follows:

(1) Elemental substance perceives all forms by itself. Now when anything perceives an object by itself, there is no intermediary between itself and the object. Therefore there is no intermediary between elemental substance and the forms it perceives. Following this I shall posit: the forms that elemental substance perceives by itself without mediation either exist within its own true being or are close to it. But they cannot be close to it because they require a sustaining support and no support is there but the true being of the soul.
(2) This becomes even more manifest if elemental substance resembles forms in that these are intrinsically elemental and spiritual, and become corporeal only because of the physical matter that sustains them. Now the doctrine of similars is that they join and become united. In consideration of this forms ought therefore to unite with elemental substance. But if forms unite with elemental substance, then they and it are one. And if the true being of forms and that of elemental substance are one, then the forms must be present within the true being of elemental substance.

(3) Further, the following arguments can make this still clearer. Whatever has an interior and an exterior is a compound substance, and every compound substance has an inside and an outside. Now when we attach to one of these propositions this other: that elemental substance is not compound, what will follow is: therefore elemental substance has neither inside nor outside. Consequently nothing exists that is interior to or exterior to its true being. Hence there is nothing within it nor without it.

To this conclusion I shall subjoin the following: forms are found in elemental substance. And so the forms found in elemental substance are neither within nor without its true being. To this I shall add: whatever does not exist within nor without another but nevertheless is found in it is of one and the same true being with that in which it is found. Therefore the forms found in elemental substance are of one and the same true being with it.

(4) The following proofs will develop this even further. Elemental substance perceives form by unification. And the unification of substance with form is accomplished through motion. Hence elemental substance apprehends forms by motion. And every motion takes place in time. So elemental substance apprehends forms in time. Now, whatever apprehends anything in time requires longer time for perception of more and more widespread percepts than for one only. Therefore elemental substance apprehends many widespread forms in a longer time than that required for perception of one only. And whatever apprehends many widespread forms in a longer time than is required by one cannot behold them simultaneously. Therefore elemental substance cannot apprehend many widespread substances simultaneously.
To this conclusion I shall subjoin: elemental substance of itself apprehends many forms at once. Hence the many forms that it perceives at once are not dispersed. To this I shall add: perceptible forms in physical substances are widespread. Therefore the forms that elemental substance perceives simultaneously are not those present in physical substances.

Again by a different sequence: the many forms that elemental substance perceives simultaneously are not dispersed. And nondispersed forms are found in the true being of elemental substance. Therefore the many forms perceived simultaneously by elemental substance are found within the true being of elemental substance.

Again by another chain of reasoning: the forms that elemental substance perceives simultaneously must of necessity be united. And united forms are found only in elemental substance. Therefore of necessity the forms with which elemental substance is united must be found only in elemental substance.

30 Proofs 5-7

(5) This can be made still more evident by the following reasoning: the many forms that elemental substance perceives unite with its true being in a spiritual union. But the true being of elemental substance is itself united in a spiritual union. Hence the forms that elemental substance perceives are united in a spiritual union. And all things that are united in a spiritual union exist in something that is united in a spiritual union. Consequently the multiple forms that elemental substance perceives exist in a single reality that is united in a spiritual union. And elemental substance is a single reality that is united in a spiritual union. Therefore the multiple forms that elemental substance apprehends exist in elemental substance.

(6) The following argumentation will clarify the point still further: elemental substance perceives all forms by itself. And the form of anything at all is itself. Hence elemental substance apprehends all forms by its own form. Next I shall state: elemental substance apprehends all forms by its own. And such apprehension takes place when its own form is united with them. Therefore its own form of elemental substance unites with all forms.
Again I shall state: its own form of elemental substance unites with all forms. And whatever form unites with all others is comprehensive of all with which it unites. Therefore the form of elemental substance is comprehensive of all forms with which it unites.

To this conclusion I shall append: the form of elemental substance is comprehensive of the forms with which it unites. And whatever is comprehensive of many holds those many within itself. Hence within the form of elemental substance are found all the forms that it includes. Next I shall begin with this conclusion and state: all forms are to be found in that of elemental substance. And the form of elemental substance is its true being. Therefore all forms are to be found within the true being of elemental substance.

(7) This will be made even more evident by the following sequence: sensible forms are effects of the form of elemental substance. And every effect is to be found in its cause. Thus sensible forms are to be found in the form of elemental substance. Now the form of elemental substance is its true being. Therefore sensible forms are to be found in the true being of elemental substance.

31 The possibility of remote perception

Will an elemental substance perceive real forms supported in matter? We know that perception can take place at a distance, because the union of a form supported in matter with an elemental substance is not a physical one but spiritual; it is the form of this form that joins with that of elemental substance.

DISCIPLE All the arguments you have advanced up until now convince me that sensible forms are present within the true being of elemental substance, inasmuch as elemental substance apprehends all forms of and by itself. But a certain other doubt strikes me: do you truly mean that elemental substance perceives all forms of and by itself even when such forms are present in what supports them and not within itself? In other words, when elemental substance seeks to picture them by itself, or when it encounters them by itself, will it perceive them exactly as they are, even though they are not present within itself?
MASTER Is it perhaps possible that the true being of this substance can perceive a form, even when the true being of the one is not united with that of the other so that they become one?

DISCIPLE It may well be maintained that the true being of the substance perceives the form even at a distance, just as it perceives palpable forms apart from their matters when they are quite far away, yet nevertheless discovers them with requisite discernment, perceives them and conceives them as if actually present.

MASTER The meaning of perceiving a form is that there is an imprint on the true being of the substance by the form. This imprint is made by the union of what impresses with what receives the impression. Consequently for a form to be perceived by a substance they must join with and unite with each other.

DISCIPLE If a form unites with the true being of an elemental substance, such form must be either the same one that is sustained in the matter, or another. But if the former, it can unite with the substance only by separation from the matter. But it does not separate from the matter. Therefore it does not unite with the substance. If on the other hand the form that unites with the substance is not the one sustained in the matter, then the one sustained in the matter cannot be said to be the form found in elemental substance.

MASTER The union of the form borne in matter with the true being of elemental substance is not a physical one like its union with matter that would prevent its joining with elemental substance except by separation from the matter. Rather, their union is a spiritual one, inasmuch as the form of this same form unites with the true being of the form that exists potentially in the true being of elemental substance, and then this form emerges from potentiality into actuality.
32-33 Proofs that multiples can exist within elemental unity

32 Proofs 1-5

DISCIPLE It is now obvious to me that elemental substance can perceive forms only if they are existent within it. But my mind is not at ease with the thought that a single reality exists that assimilates to everything, that is indeed everything, that sustains everything and that holds everything without becoming congested and crowded. I hope you will explain to me how multiple entities can exist within a single elemental reality so that I may understand this teaching fully and gain increasing satisfaction from it.

MASTER How multiple entities can exist within a single elemental reality will be disclosed to you when we discuss the form of universal reason, which sustains the totality of forms (V,16-19). You will then understand the placement of inferiors within superiors and of parts in the whole; and after that you will achieve an understanding of the subsistence of all forms in universal matter and of universal matter and universal form together with everything contained therein within the Will of the supreme and holy Primary Creator. Listen, therefore, to the proofs that confirm the existence of multiplicity within a single elemental reality.

(1) The numerous forms embraced within elemental substance are elemental and spiritual. And anything that is elemental and spiritual does not occupy space. Therefore the numerous forms gathered within elemental substance do not occupy space. Taking this as premise I shall add another: when anything does not occupy space, one or many of it are equal in their placement within the one reality that sustains them. Consequently, of the numerous forms assembled within elemental substance, one and many are equal in their placement within the one reality that sustains them. I now premise this and subjoin: and when one or many of anything are equal in their placement within a single reality, the placement of many of it does not prevent its being within a single reality. Therefore the placement of many forms within elemental substance does not prevent its presence within elemental substance.
(2) Elemental and compound substances are opposites. Now whatever comports with one of two opposites is the contrary of what comports with the other. Hence what squares with compound substance is the opposite of what squares with elemental. With this as prefix I shall state: compound substance is physical place for physical forms. Now in anything that is physical place for something it is impossible to situate many simultaneously. Therefore it is impossible to situate many forms simultaneously in compound substance.

The converse of this proof is: elemental substance is spiritual place for spiritual forms. Now whatever is spiritual place for anything is not precluded from harboring many forms simultaneously. Therefore it is not impossible for many forms to subsist simultaneously within elemental substance.

(3) Multiplicity derives from unity. And whatever derives from something is present in that from which it derives. Hence multiplicity is present in unity. Proceeding from this I shall assert: compound substance has many forms. And all multiples are present in unity. Consequently the many forms of compound substance are present in unity. And the form of elemental substance is a unity. Therefore the many forms of compound substance are present in the form of elemental substance.

(4) The more elemental and unitary a substance is, the more it will amass forms, and numerous forms will exist within it; while the more corporeal and multiple it is, the fewer forms it will have. From these two principles we shall develop a single proposition, which states: the accumulation of manifold forms takes place owing to the oneness of substance and is withdrawn as this is lost.

Next I shall append this proposition: anything that must happen because of another but is withdrawn upon the withdrawal of the latter has been caused by it. Therefore the oneness of substance is due cause of the accumulation of manifold forms within it. And the oneness of elemental substance is because of the unity existing within it. Therefore the unity in elemental substance is due cause of the accumulation of manifold forms within it.
Now proceeding from this conclusion I shall state: unity assembles a multiplicity of forms. And whenever anything assembles a multiplicity of forms, these are to be found within it. Hence in unity a multiplicity of forms exist. Proceeding from this I shall conclude: a multiplicity of forms exist within unity. And the unity of elemental substance is its form. Thus a multiplicity of forms is to be found in the form of elemental substance.

(5) The more unitary a form is, the more it accumulates a multiplicity of forms. And the forms of elemental substance are more unitary than those of compound substance. Hence the forms of elemental substances are more cumulative of a multiplicity of forms than are those of compound substances. And the forms of elemental substances are unitary. Therefore unitary forms accumulate more of them than do those of compound substances.

### 33 Proofs 6-12

(6) Unity is in and of itself the source of multiplicity. And whatever is inherently the source of anything sustains that thing. Hence unity inherently sustains multiplicity. And when anything inherently sustains multiplicity, this latter is to be found inherently within it. Thus multiplicity is to be found inherently in unity. And the true being of unity is one. Therefore multiplicity is to be found in the true being of the one.

(7) Every form unites what is imaged by it. And what unites anything does not multiply it. Hence form does not multiply what is imaged by it. And so since form is not the multiplier, matter must be so.

I shall take this as premise and state: multiplication of form is because of matter. And no (physical) matter exists in elemental substance. Thus in elemental substance forms do not multiply. Consequently in it they unite. With this as premise I shall assert: in elemental substance multiple forms unite. And what is united is not precluded from existing in unitary elemental substance. Therefore multiple forms are not precluded from existing in unitary elemental substance.

---

129 On unity and form see II, 20 and IV,11-13.
(8) Elemental substance is not accidental on space. And the true being of anything not accidental on space is equidistant from everything. Now whatever is equidistant from everything perceives the forms of all things at one and the same time. And when anything perceives all forms at once, these are found within its true being. Consequently the forms of all things are found in the true being of elemental substance. And the forms of all are many. Therefore many forms are found in the true being of elemental substance.

(9) It is a property of continuous quantity that it occupies a space equal to itself. And nothing else can occupy the same space as that which has the property of filling a space equal to itself as long as the latter occupies it. Hence a property of quantity is that nothing else can occupy its space as long as it is tenant. And that whose space cannot be occupied by another as long as it is tenanted cannot unite with anything else in one space. Therefore a property of quantity is that it cannot unite with another in one and the same space.

Next I shall take this conclusion as premise and add the following: forms existing in elemental substance are without quantity. Hence these do unite within a single space. Now elemental substance is not a physical space. And a property of physical space is that a multiplicity cannot unite in it simultaneously. Therefore in elemental substance such a multiplicity can indeed simultaneously unite.

(10) Existence in spiritual substances is more exalted than any mode of being in physical substances. And the aggregation of numerous forms in a single subject can take place in compound substance, as for instance color, shape, line and surface, which are brought together in compound substance. Therefore spiritual substance is even more worthy that this should take place in it.

(11) Individuals and species are many. And they exist within genera. Hence multiples exist within genera. And the genera are unitary. Therefore many exist within one.

(12) If lowers originate in highers, then the lower exists within the higher. But the lower does derive from the higher. Hence it exists in the higher. And the lower is multiple. Thus multiplicity exists within the higher. But the higher is unitary. Therefore a multiplicity exists within a unity.
TWO PROBLEMS

34, 35 How can a spiritual reality become physical?

When elemental substance joins with its contrary compound substance, the result is a form not fully spiritual nor yet fully physical but more elemental than matter and capable of being held within the soul devoid of its matter; the form conforms to the matter and in that sense is physical; and there is a difference between the form of rarefied and of dense matter, the latter being more perceptible and the former less so, as when light floods matters of varying densities.

The Master continues: We have now put forward as many proofs as possible that existents, being multiple, can have their being within unity. This makes clear what we have explained before – that the forms sustained in compound substance have existence within elemental substance (III, 25). Herein also lies the evidence of what we sought to establish: the existence of elemental substances that imprint their characteristics and shapes in compound substance.

DISCIPLe Although my misgiving about a multiplicity existing all together within a single reality has been resolved, still two further doubts have occurred to me that are no less important than it. It might be asked how spiritual forms become physical, and also how a physical accident is generated from a spiritual substance.

MASTER We have already covered enough ground in discussing this matter;\textsuperscript{130} nevertheless I am willing to review it briefly now. My view is that when any two contraries join together, from their union a different entity is created that is not the same as either of them when they existed independently. And since elemental substance is the contrary of compound, from the union of these another must come into being that differs from each one of them. This other is the form sustained in compound substance.

\textsuperscript{130}III, 16; III, 18 (18); III, 20 (27).
Its form is not wholly spiritual, in that it is sustained in physical matter. Correspondingly it is not wholly physical, being more elemental than matter and capable of being sustained opportunely within the soul devoid of matter.

Furthermore, physical matter is bounded and compressed, and when anything is so bounded and compressed, the form poured into it by its corresponding substance spreads over its surface and remains there: thus the form spread by elemental substance on physical matter must extend over its surface and remain there, since the form conforms to the matter in shape and characteristics. Thus since matter is itself physical, the form spread over it by spiritual substance must also be physical.

[F 3.23] In addition, it is the nature of form to penetrate receptive matter that is suited to receive it, because of the power of penetration of the primary form that encompasses all forms and its diffusion in primary matter as has already been shown (III,13,p.100). If the matter is rarefied, the form will be diffused within it, dispersed, obscured and indiscernible to sense; if on the other hand the matter is dense, the form will be less able to penetrate and be diffused through it. In that case the true being of the form will be compacted, not dispersed, and will become manifest to sense on account of its consistence, because when the true being of anything is compressed it gains tangibility and presents itself to sense, whereas contrariwise when it is dispersed it becomes more rarefied and inapparent to sense.

As a guide for thinking of the spread of spiritual forms over physical matter and consequent evidencing of physical forms in physical matter, consider the outpouring of light on bodies and the resulting visibility of colors.

35 (the same continued)

DISCIPLE Please provide proof of this, to make it clear.
MASTER  It is clear that colors are perceived by their presence, not their absence. This is because luminosity is inherently spiritual and ethereal; consequently its true being, which is its form, is visible only when it conjoins a body that has a surface. When not so conjoined, its form is unmanifest and invisible to sense, like light radiating into the atmosphere, the form of which cannot be detected by sense until it envelops some solid object such as the earth, whereupon its luminosity appears and presents itself to sense-perception. And when the form of light appears on the superficies of the object, then the form of the color it bears shows forth inasmuch as the form of the light cannot become visible apart from that of the color.

Here is the proof: the form of light becomes visible when it unites with the superficies of an object. And since the superficies sustains in itself the true being of the color, the light that conjoins the superficies must also conjoin the color as it does so; and the color must appear through the manifestation of the light.

Now the argumentation for perceiving light along with color is made as follows: the light of sight unites with that of the sun because of their similarity. And sunlight unites with color. Thus the light of sight unites with color. By another reasoning: light unites with the color borne on the surface of an object. And the light becomes visible when so united. Therefore the color appears as the light meets the surface.\[131\]

In conformity with this logic you will consider with God’s help the spread of spiritual form over physical matter; namely, by comparing the spiritual form in elemental substance to sunlight, the form spread over matter to the luminosity on the surface of an object, and the color to the physical form potentially in physical matter, since color exists potentially in body.

\[131\] These points are discussed in Aristotle's *De anima*, II,7 and Plato's *Timaeus* #45.
When you compare these forms with each other you will find that the physical form potentially in the matter becomes perceptible to sense when united with the form spread over it by spiritual form, just as color exists potentially in body but appears to sense when the luminosity radiated to it by the sun unites with it. In this way you will ascertain that the form spread over matter by spiritual form appears to sense when united with the physical form that is potentially within the matter. They both become one, exactly as the luminosity spread over the superfcies of body appears to sense when it unites with that superfcies and they become one.

36 Second problem: how can accidental form be generated from spiritual substance?

Physical form is not accident but substance seen as accidental only relative to the matter that supports it; and it is a substance in that it completes the true being of elemental substance and issues from the form of this. Indeed, it can be viewed as both substance and accident.

DISCIPLE Thanks to the four methods you have given (III,34) I now understand how it is that spiritual form becomes physical when united with physical matter. Please show me now, therefore, how it is possible for accidental form to be generated from spiritual substance.

MASTER Two replies may be made to this question. One is that physical form is not actual accident but rather substance, since it perfects the true being of the matter in which it is sustained. It is referred to as accident merely as relative to the matter that sustains it.

The second is that this form, even if it is an accident, does not derive from the matter of elemental substance, that is, the matter that sustains its form, but instead is drawn from its form, which is an accident of the matter that sustains it; but nevertheless this form (of elemental substance) is a substance inasmuch as it perfects the true being of elemental substance. This is why the form sustained in compound substance is said to be a substance, because it issues from the form of elemental substance, which is a substance.
Consequently, since the form sustained in the matter of elemental substance is itself a substance, and also an accident because of being sustained in the matter of elemental substance, it is not inconceivable that the form issuing from it into compound substance should be itself a substance, and yet also an accident because of being sustained in the matter of compound substance.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

37 The disciple’s alternative: transiting forms

What if an elemental substance has no form? What if the soul has none? Knowledge would then arise from transitory accidents in matter as these confront the soul.

DISCIPLE Why was primary form called substantial and not substance, considering that it completes the true being of matter, which is a substance? (V,22 and 26)

MASTER Because it can have no existence except in the matter that sustains it.

DISCIPLE Well, then, if the form that subsists in compound matter is a substance, is it a mistake to consider anything to be an accident?

MASTER Form cannot be definitely called an accident any more than quantity and some kinds of quality, since quantity is the inseparable form of the true being of substance and completes it, and similarly some qualities are substantial differentiae that enable the true being of the substance they occupy to exist; but in other instances it is impossible to call them substances.

DISCIPLE You have now made it clear to me that the forms sustained in compound substance issue from elemental substance, and you have resolved my doubts in that matter.

But what will you answer if I take the contrary and suggest that elemental substance, like the soul, lacks any form of its own? If you counter that forms are infixed in the true being of the soul, I shall reply that these are accidental forms that transit across the true being of the soul like the forms of light over the atmosphere.
They do not remain stationary in its substance nor do they alter its true being. Rather, these forms affect the soul only by reason of compound matter. When this confronts the soul, its features are joined to it and its shapes impressed on it because of the intrinsic ethereality of the substance of the soul; they pass through it exactly as shapes reflected in polished objects pass over such objects. Since the forms are not intrinsic to these objects but are merely accidents that happen to them, this eliminates the idea that such sensible forms derive from spiritual substances.

MASTER Please explain and clarify this alternative more fully so that my response may logically follow.

DISCIPLE Since all knowledge and reasoning are based on uninvolved concepts such as the ten genera, this must mean that whatever is portrayed in the soul that this communicates in consequence is made up of these elemental concepts in various combinations and arrangements of differentiae, properties and accidents.

Now since knowledge of these concepts means that the form of each of them subsists in the soul with this as their substratum just as matter is the substratum for its forms: it follows that knowledge must be the generation and continuance of all these forms in the soul, followed by their grouping and classification by differentiae, propria and accidents. In this way, then, these resemble the accidents found in physical substance that flit across it in succession. That being so, and the elemental concepts from the combination of which sciences are born and speech is evolved being assembled from natural matter and its accidents, which is the substance that sustains the categories; --and the soul ranking higher than matter, and knowledge signifying the inherence within sense of sense-known forms, that is, of substance-based accidents in sense and their attraction to the imaginative faculty and then their imprint and perception in the soul by reason of becoming more ethereal and more tenuous through their double sojourn in the two mansions of sense and imagination –
from all this it is evident that the soul lacks any inherent knowledge of its own as well as any fundamental forms, but rather accepts forms that come to it because of its tenuousness, its elementalness and the ethereality of its substance. Knowledge becomes available to it when it stands above matter and its accidents and unites its own true being with the forms of the accidents. First the shapes and designs of the accidents are represented in it because of their immediacy and contact and they make an impress on it by which the soul perceives true knowledge of these forms that are imprinted on it by the impress of the sensible forms on the senses and their perception by the soul when they act on it. In this way they pass over the soul in transit without remaining attached to its being when they act on it.

And since accident-forms are by nature divisible, being compound and not at all elemental, they divide and disperse within the soul and establish themselves separately, as individual forms within the true being of the soul. And so it was appropriate that these forms established in the true being of the soul should be called concepts, inasmuch as they are conceived in it and exist in it.

[F 3.24] Now since the soul stands midway between reason and sensation, when it inclines toward sense, any awareness of what lies in reason must tend to disappear. In the same way when it turns toward reason, its grasp of what lies in sense is lost, because each extreme is the contrary of the other, and when it directs its attention to one, it abandons the other.

Meanwhile, as the forms move in succession through its substance they are not essential to it like the sense-known forms moving over the sense of sight, since when it passes from some to others they are lost to it and cease to exist in it. This is what I believe about the forms present within the soul.

---

132 Cf. II ,6 and III, 42, beginning.
But as to the notion that these forms may be intrinsic to the soul and inseparable from its substance, it would take a lengthy discourse to prove the truth of that. Please, then, take up now the second principle that you proposed (in III,25 and III,34), that sense-known forms exist in elemental substance.

38 How and what the sensing soul can know

Six proofs that the soul is intrinsically knowing; but uninstrumented perception of sense-forms is perhaps excluded except by conjecture. Perceptible forms do exist in the soul, but potentially as in the rational soul and the reason, each of which embraces all forms and the reason most of all.

MASTER If you have understood throughout all that you have said that rational knowledge is excluded from the soul, or that it cannot of itself apprehend rational forms, this is not possible in the light of proofs showing that the soul is indeed intrinsically knowing. I shall briefly review the bases of these proofs as follows:

If the [sensing] soul can receive images and forms of things, they exist potentially within it, and since that is so, it knows them intrinsically (III, 28).

If the soul perceives forms within itself without any organ of perception, they exist potentially within it.

If men share in the perception of anything, knowledge of it lies within their own true being

If men learn without being taught, knowledge is present within their being.

If the soul has foreknowledge of existents before they exist, then it has intrinsic knowledge.

If the soul perceives and feels from earliest bodily growth, then it has intrinsic knowledge. And there are other proofs that demonstrate the same.

If, however, you have understood that sense knowledge is not present in the soul and that sense forms are not apprehended in the absence of an appropriate organ, this could perhaps be the case in a certain way, namely: what we have understood is that sense forms are not present in the soul except as brought to it by organs appropriate to their perception.
But even though the soul can readily apprehend these forms by imagination without any organ of perception, this can take place only subsequent to its perception of them by means of sense organs.

Furthermore, we did not mean that these forms are present in the soul after they come to it and it embraces them in the same way that they are found in their sustaining substances; rather we meant that sensible forms are present in the soul potentially, and that these forms are in fact similar to the sense forms and consequently could join and unite with them.

And the view that we expressed, that sensible form is present potentially in the soul, is the basis for this principle’s ability to receive sense forms and for their being imprinted on it and united with it.

But when we declared that all palpable forms are to be found potentially in the soul, we did not mean that each will be encountered there individually as they are in their physical supports. Rather, we meant that the form of the sensing soul is a single elemental form that assembles within itself all sense forms; and it is capable of sustaining all sense forms in actuality when they unite with it and exist within it potentially. We ought not therefore to deny that manifold forms are gathered in one, proof of which we have already provided (III, 32 and 33).

Now what we teach about the form of this [i.e., the sensing] soul is similar to what is said of the form of the rational soul and of reason: in each case the form embraces all perceived forms, but that of reason embraces more than that of the soul. In saying this, we do not mean that each of these forms exists in each of these substances singly, nor that the forms come to them from outside; rather, we understand that the form of each is inherently universal; that in its essence and nature it includes and sustains all form. We could not say that all forms exist within the one that embraces them, whichever form of universal substance it may be, if such forms did not exist potentially.

133 “Sensing soul” – animae sentientis. This first explicit reference to the “sensing soul” sheds light on all the references to anima (the soul generically speaking) in this and the neighboring chapters. See the footnote to III, 24 and the introductory note to III, 28. (LL)
The necessity of form in elemental substance

Elemental substance perceives other forms by its own form. It has form because without form it would lack existence.

DISCIPLE Please develop this idea still further.

MASTER If elemental substance perceives many forms, it does so by means of its own form, for if elemental substance apprehends manifold forms, it does so either by means of what is present within it or by what is not. If by what lies within it, then multiple forms are in it; but if by what is not within it, then it is not impossible for some substance other than that of the soul to perceive such forms. But that is erroneous.

Furthermore, if the form of elemental substance that perceives forms does so by means of what is not present within it, any harmonious relation between it and the forms it perceives is impossible. But if there is in fact no such relation between them, they will not become united in any way. In fact, the basis for harmony between any two forms is that the form of elemental substance should be capable of receiving the form that joins with it and be ready to unite with it.

DISCIPLE None of the arguments you have advanced will be valid until you establish that the soul itself possesses form. What will you answer if I insist that the soul is without form of its own?

MASTER An elemental substance either has its corresponding form or is without one. But it cannot fail to have such a form, since in that case it would not have existence. The existence of anything derives from form. In addition, if elemental substance had no form proper to itself its species would be no different from any other, because all difference comes from form. Also, it would be impossible to distinguish any form from others, since it can distinguish them only by means of its own (III, 30, proof 6).

134 See the discussion in III, 37 above.
If, however, elemental substance does have its appropriate form, it will accept either all forms, or none, or one. If it actually accepted one only, there would be no difference between the form of elemental substance and that of compound, since compound substance accepts one form only, and elemental substance many (III, 22, proofs 37 and 38). If it accepted no form at all, elemental substance would perceive nothing at all, but the evidence shows otherwise. What remains therefore is that elemental substance apprehends all forms.

Again, since elemental substance does have form, it is either like or unlike all form. If unlike, it accepts none; if, however, it is like all form, it accepts all and accepting all, all are to be found within it.

40 The form of the soul

Why cannot the soul be without form? This can be true in idea but not in fact. What purpose would the sense organs serve? How could the soul become informed? The soul is like reason but of lower rank, and no one can say that knowledge is not the very essence of reason. Reason embraces the whole of form, and so does the soul.

DISCIPLE Why is the substance of the soul not like that of the categories, which I believe to be devoid of all forms?

MASTER The existence of this substance devoid of form is a matter of surmise, not of reality. We do not say that the substance of the soul cannot be thought of as lacking form, but we do say that in terms of fact and existence it must be present; for although it is not impossible to distinguish by conjecture between the matter and the form of the soul, nevertheless in fact and in reality it is indeed impossible.

Furthermore, if anyone denies that the substance of the soul has form and in consequence that all forms are present within it, and alleges that forms pass over it as they do in a mirror, even so this does not negate the existence of a similarity between the form of the soul and the forms that pass over it. What would this say about why the sense organs were created (cf. II, 6), or how the soul could be instructed if no stable forms are in it?
And what would it reveal about the form of reason, which contains all forms, seeing that no one can deny that knowledge is essential to reason? Reason is indeed never at any time lacking knowledge.

Now since it must be granted that reason’s form encompasses each and every form and that all forms exist within it in a more elemental nature than they represent in themselves: why still deny that the form of the soul embraces all form? Except that here it is of lower rank than reason, inasmuch as the form of reason is more refined and brighter than that of the soul; although these forms are present in the substance of the soul in a finer texture than in the substance that sustains tangible forms.

[F 3.25] What we ought therefore to understand with reference to the existence of all sensible forms within that of the soul is the union of them all in it, since the form of the soul in its own nature and being is that of an existent that brings together the true being of every form in an intrinsic association. All are united within the meaning of form, all being in fact forms and so at one in the concept of form. This concept unites with the form of the soul, both being forms; and the particular forms, which are the total of the sensate ones, unite in universal form as an aggregate of all. This universal form then combines with that of the soul. Therefore the forms it brings together are present in that of the soul.

41 The soul’s acquisition of knowledge

Forms in the soul are more conjoined and in compound substance more divided and dispersed; and in reason their union is much greater. Reason perceives genera and species, and the soul differentiae, propria and accidents. When the sensing soul joins with reason, it perceives reality.
DISCIPLE I think that you have left me with no escape for denying that all forms are existent in the soul. But how will you reply to my objection that the knowledge found in the soul results from accidents sustained in compound substance that do not exist inherently in the soul because this latter is of a higher order than compound substance? (III,37, p. 149)

MASTER The fact that the substance of the soul is of higher order than compound does not preclude the presence of forms in its substance as well as in compound; rather, such forms are present divided and dispersed, not united, in compound substance, but in the soul they are conjoined, not divided, but unified.

In the substance of reason, however, their union is much greater, as I shall point out when I discuss the form of universal reason (V,16); because [F 3.26] the forms in the soul lie midway between the physical ones sustained in compound substance and the spiritual ones in the substance of reason. Here is the proof: reason perceives that existence in all things which is the elemental unifying form of genera and species, while the soul perceives nonexistence, or the differentiae, propria and accidents that touch upon the senses.

This is why, when the soul seeks to know the reality of anything, it joins and unites with reason in order to acquire through it the elemental being. And when the soul joins and combines with reason, their forms unite in perfect balance and they become one.

Now because genus exists within the form of reason, since genus is being, and differentia exists in the form of the soul, since differentia is other than existence, when the one (reason) is superposed on the other (soul), the genus in reason being superimposed on the differentia in the soul: then the soul perceives reality, because the elements of being, which are genus and differentia, have been combined with its own true being; and at that point its knowledge of the real nature of the object and its definition is complete.
42 How sense-forms can exist at higher levels

What exists physically in compound substance is more elemental in the soul and even more so in reason. Spiritual form penetrates physical, and the soul is intermediate between them and perceives at all levels. Every lower exists within a higher, and primary universal matter sustains the whole.

DISCIPLE Please explain to me in what way the nine categories, which are the sum-total of sense-perceptible forms, can exist in the substance of the [sensing] soul and reason.

MASTER The nine sensible categories that constitute compound substance have their existence in it physically, dispersedly and dividedly, exactly as sense is aware of them in compound substance; and their existence in the soul is more elemental since they have been separated from the substance that supports them, and in reason even more purely so, since each of them there is determined by its own characteristic definition. Hence the form of reason is the opposite of the form found in compound substance, because the former is purely substantial (i.e. not accidental) and the latter purely physical (III,37).

But physical form is not alien to the concept of spiritual form, because the latter penetrates the former inwardly. The form of the soul is intermediate and participates in both poles in that it is spiritual because not sustained in compound substance, and it is physical because in itself it resembles forms sustained in compound substance. And just as forms sustained in compound substance have to be present in the true being of the soul in a spiritual way, so also must these forms be in the true being of reason, but much more spiritually.

In like manner all these forms whether spiritual or physical must exist in the fountainhead and source of form, which is will, since whatever is exists in the specific being of Perfection and Bounteousness. Each substance is a matter that is substratum for what is above it and active in what is beneath it. Just as matter is a potency that receives sense forms from the soul, so the soul is a receptive potency and a matter subject to the reception of rational forms; and the whole is designed to receive form from will.  

135 Will has been discussed in 1,2;1,5; 1,7; II,13; III,16.
Now, as to what you assume, that when the [sensing] soul inclines toward reason it perceives what is there, and when it leans toward physical matter it apprehends what is there, your supposition is correct (III,37, p.149). What this means is that when the soul inclines toward physical matter, it apprehends the forms sustained in it by actual physical perception, while within itself it perceives them potentially by spiritual cognition; and when it rises to the level of reason, it becomes sensible of them by rational perceptivity, by acquiring knowledge of their description and essential nature.

This, however, does not necessitate that the transit of forms over the soul should resemble the passage of light through the atmosphere in such a way that the forms are not intrinsic to it, as you have proposed (III,37); because unless they were intrinsic to it, they would not unite with it nor come forth into actuality.

Now as evidence of the truth of what I have been propounding about forms, consider this: the soul receives rational form from the reason in dreams in the way that is appropriate to the soul or by imagination; and subsequent to the dream experiences it physically and materially. And in the pattern of this illustration we shall examine the existence of every lower in a higher, until we come to the primary matter that sustains totality. This will be made clear to you when I discuss primary universal matter and primary universal form (IV, 9 et seqq.)
**43 Substantial inactivity**

*Brief review of #25-33 and 37. Body is inherently at rest and the motion of the elements does not depend on it.*

**DISCIPLE** I now fully understand the requisite existence of sensible form in elemental substance, and whatever uncertainty I had in that respect has been resolved,\(^{136}\) such as how sensate forms could exist in the substance of the soul and what kind of existence it must have been in view of the soul’s perception of them, and how numerous existents can reside in one only. Equally cleared up is my doubt about sense- and reason-known forms in the soul passing over it like light through the atmosphere. Your first postulate that sense-known forms in compound substance have been communicated from elemental substances has been confirmed. It is clear by the synthetic method, but you promised that you would show the same by analysis, by resolving these imprints communicated from any and all elemental substance to compound substance and by some elemental substances to others, thus revealing to me the quantity and quality of the elemental substances. Please begin, therefore, to explain this.

**MASTER** I shall now begin to produce a description of elemental substances by the rule of analysis in terms of their imprint on each other, although this is evident by the rule of synthesis. But first I want to ask you about two ideas that you require for understanding this section.

**DISCIPLE** What are they?

**MASTER** Do you agree that body is inherently at rest and without activity?

**DISCIPLE** I would agree, except that I am aware of some bodies, as for instance fire, air and water, each of which can move in space.

**MASTER** Since the motion of each one of them is not dependent on their being body but on their being qualities by virtue of the qualities they possess, you will realize that their motions provide no grounds for denying that body is inherently at rest and without activity.

---

\(^{136}\) III.25, page 127, line 17.
DISCIPLE  What evidence is there that the movements of the elements do not depend on their being bodies?

MASTER  In that case their motions would not be different from each other.

DISCIPLE  Why not?

MASTER  If they conformed to the nature of body, their motions would be uniform, because body is unitary.

DISCIPLE  Why cannot a unitary body move with different motions?

MASTER  Because diversity of motions comes from diversity of natures.

DISCIPLE  Why does it?

MASTER  Because a single motion depends on a single nature, from which it can be separated only by the latter’s annihilation. Similarly a second motion cannot be added except by destruction of the prior one.

DISCIPLE  Your explanation has convinced me that movements of the elements do not depend on their being bodies, and I am now sure that body is inherently at rest and inactive. This is one of the two questions you raised. What is the other?

MASTER  I also want to know whether an action presupposes an agent, or not.

44  Necessity for outside activation

Any activity requires an instrumentality, and the composition and cohesion of the parts of body presuppose such an agent, one that can attract, hold, assimilate and expel matter.

DISCIPLE  Since activity is an accident that has no existence of its own, it must be said to have some instrumentality by virtue of which it subsists and has being.
MASTER   Therefore it must be conceded that activities in body have an outside cause.

DISCIPLE   It cannot be otherwise.

MASTER   Body is a continuous composite of parts. It must in consequence be said to have some instrumentality that composes and maintains its parts.

DISCIPLE   So it must.

MASTER   This composition and maintenance of the parts of the composite take place because of their motion and mutual attraction, and then by the continuance of each in the place where its motion and attraction ceased.

DISCIPLE   That is so.

MASTER   That is why there must be some existent other than body with the property of unconditionally attracting and holding the parts of body.

DISCIPLE   There must be. But please show incontrovertibly that body is made up of parts.\(^{137}\)

MASTER   It is known to be made up of parts by the way it can be resolved into them in thought, by the manner of its distribution in seven directions, by its division into substance, measure and shape, and because it is found to have depth in the direction contrary to its natural motion.

DISCIPLE   Please explain further, although this is really adequate.

MASTER   There is pretty much the same relation between a thin, dispersed substance and a dense, compacted one as between rational and sensible substance; the density is from the agglomeration and compression of innumerable parts. This is the demonstration that you asked for.

DISCIPLE   Now I have grasped this, and I have also understood that there is some other substance that brings together and unites the parts of elemental body.

MASTER   What, then, is the consequence of this?

---

\(^{137}\) See II, 16.
DISCIPLE   It is that this substance aggregates and holds together the parts of the various bodies, as, for instance, the aggregation and consolidation of the elements in minerals, plants and animals.

MASTER    Consider the plants and animals again, and you will discover that in them the activity of this substance is stronger and more evident.

DISCIPLE   Please explain this more fully to me.

MASTER    Do you not observe that every plant and animal requires some matter to make up for what has been lost from it? Thus some force is required that will attract parts of this matter and bind them to the parts of body. Again, it has need of a potency that can hold the parts together once they are merged. Similarly it must also have the power to transform the parts of the matter and assimilate them to the parts they join. Then it must be competent to expel redundant matter. Hence some substance must exist in plants and animals that carries out these functions by means of these potencies.

DISCIPLE   It must indeed. But by what necessity must I concur that these functions are carried out by one substance only rather than by several, and by many potencies and not one alone?

MASTER    If these functions were carried out by many substances with no possibility of one being higher or more perfect than another since its functions would not be so: then you may be sure that the operative substance is one only; moreover, these operations belong to the same genus, since attraction is of the same genus as expulsion and digestion. But retention is the cessation of motion.

DISCIPLE   It is unquestioned now that these operations are carried out by one substance only. But please show that they are done by various potencies.

MASTER    If this substance’s potency were one only, its operation would be one only.

DISCIPLE   Why so?

MASTER    Because the existence of an activity depends on a potency; and in addition, these operations occur one before another.
The particular responds to the universal

*Some universal substance must aggregate and maintain the parts of body and communicate its own nature and potency; and all particulars are endowed with the gifts of the higher universal.*

DISCIPLE  I am now satisfied that the substance that brings together the parts of plants and animals is one only, and that the operations brought about in these derive from the potencies by which this substance fulfills its natural processes. But how will you meet the observation that such processes are performed by the four elements?

MASTER  Body has already been shown to be inherently at rest and free of activity.

DISCIPLE  That is true of the bodies of the elements. But can it possibly be true of the qualities?

MASTER  Since the qualities require a mover, be assured that they are not self-acting.

DISCIPLE  Now at last I have become convinced that there is a substance that brings together and maintains the parts of both elemental and compound body. It is evident that the substance that acts on the two bodies is one alone, inasmuch as both operations belong to a single genus. And it is incontestable that the potencies of this substance vary because of the difference in its activities.

MASTER  You have learned well. But what follows in addition?

DISCIPLE  What follows is that some universal substance exists that aggregates and maintains the parts of universal body.

MASTER  By what necessity?

DISCIPLE  By the necessity that universal body should resemble particular elemental body composed of the elements in the matter of aggregation and retention. Their mover must therefore be conceived of as one only.

MASTER  That is appropriate. But what also follows from this statement?
DISCIPLE  It follows that this universal substance as it acts on universal body endows the particular substance that acts on particular body with its own nature and potency. Thus the particular substance responds to the universal and its particular activity to the universal one.

MASTER  Consequently when some particular activity is discovered to be manifest in particular bodies from a particular substance must there not also be found a universal activity manifest in universal body from a universal substance in conformity with our earlier precept?

DISCIPLE  It seems to me that you are alluding to the universal substances that you earlier identified as the three souls and reason, which are represented by particular substances present in plants and animals.\textsuperscript{138}

MASTER  That is what I meant. But is this necessarily the case, or not?

DISCIPLE  When I consider that particular body has need of universal, and similarly particular nature has need of universal, because the former owes its coming into being and its existence to the latter, I realize that in conformity with this view particular souls must have need of universal ones and also of universal reason because the former owe their coming-to-be and their existence to the latter.

MASTER  You will also add to this knowledge when you consider that the higher one bestows on the lower.

DISCIPLE  How do you mean?

MASTER  Because [F 3.27b] the lower substances are endowed with the brightness that comes from the higher ones, and the world is arrayed in the splendor of the high and holy Creator, as has already been made clear when we discussed the emergence of substances one from another. (III,13)

\textsuperscript{138} II, 24; III, 27; V, 20.
46 The interaction of substances

Consider the cohesion caused by nature, the growth caused by the vegetal soul, the sensation and movement caused by the sensing soul, and the thinking and knowledge caused by the rational soul and reason. These effects occur in different subjects, but the activities belong to a single genus, and so intercommunication is possible, by which the more perfect activates the less perfect.

DISCIPLE Please make clear to me [F 3.27c] the impress of higher on lower substances, and also the designs and shapes they have from one another, using the analytical method as you undertook to do. (III,43)

MASTER Are you not aware in plants of a motion of growth, nourishment and reproduction? You are thereby witness to a substance that produces such motions, namely the vegetal soul, exactly as you have been witness to the aggregation and cohesion of the parts of body by the substance that produces it, or nature.139

DISCIPLE That clearly is the case.

MASTER In the same way you will also examine motion in space, in sense perception, in thinking, in knowing and in reasoning, and you will by this be witness to the substances that bring about these motions. These are the animal [= sensing] soul, the rational soul and reason.

DISCIPLE On what grounds is it thought that the causative substance of these actions is not one alone, and that in man the substances differ from each other?

MASTER Because they are found to be separate from each other. If they were one substance alone plants would not be marked off as growing, nor animals as sensing and moving, nor men as thinking and knowing.

DISCIPLE I am now satisfied that in the way you have explained these substances are to be distinguished from each other. But please show me how they contribute to each other, and in what way the operations of these substances belong to the same genus and are similar to each other.

139 Nature: the immediate matter substratum of things which have in themselves a principle of motion or change (Aristotle: Physics, 193 a 28); see above II,12; III,20; III,22 proof 38; and III,27.
MASTER    The understanding of the effect of these substances on each other is twofold. One is in terms of activity and passivity, and the other in terms of the cause of activity and passivity. Which one, then, are you interested in?

DISCIPLE   Since my purpose for now is to understand the existence of these substances and in what way they owe it to each other, all that I require at present is to understand passivity. I believe that the instruction on the matter of passivity is deeper and more worthwhile than this present discussion.

MASTER    That is certainly true. Now, however, prepare to learn what you asked about, after certain preliminary principles have been laid down.

DISCIPLE   I am ready. But what principles are to be laid down?

MASTER    One of them is for you to realize that when two realities are alike in a given concept and share in that respect, even though that concept may differ from one to the other it must nevertheless be one only. Take for instance the nature of heat in a fire and in the surrounding atmosphere: must not the heat of the fire be the same as that found in the atmosphere, however dissimilar?

DISCIPLE   It cannot be otherwise.

MASTER    And so it is not out of line to say that the heat of the atmosphere comes from the fire-heat, but in fact it should be said to be imprinted by it.

DISCIPLE   It is as you say.

MASTER    Now since you have found that the substances and their operations are divergent in one way but convergent in another, you must realize that the concept in which they converge is one only.

DISCIPLE   So it is.

MASTER    If one of these activities is more perfect than another, must not the more perfect be the cause of the other?

DISCIPLE   It must be.
MASTER Therefore if you discover activities of nature that belong to the same genus as those of the vegetal soul and resemble them, and the activities of nature are the lesser ones, must you not concede that the vegetal soul is the cause of nature?

DISCIPLE That must be the case, not only with the vegetal soul and nature but also with all substances.

MASTER Now hear, then, how the activities of these substances belong to a single genus and resemble each other, until at last you are convinced that they have their origin in each other.

DISCIPLE I hear, and I am longing to hear, for I have never found this opinion in any philosopher, and I doubt whether anything can be more useful and practicable to round out the teaching of this chapter.

MASTER How did you come to know this?

DISCIPLE When I find that the activities of these substances belong to one genus and resemble each other, and elevate myself from lower to higher because of the similarity between them, I am able to approach the highest extreme of existence, and thereupon I discover the source of motion.

MASTER That is the truth. And you have also come to know the cause that we have just mentioned, (p.165, line 7) or the cause of activity and passivity, and you have observed there the levels of activities and have beheld all things obeying the divine command. You have seen that it is the divine goodness that moves all things.

The functions of Nature and of the Vegetal Soul.

The functions of nature are attraction, retention, assimilation and excretion; those of the vegetal soul growth and reproduction. The latter are the higher ones and thus can act on nature.

DISCIPLE Good teacher, please complete the explanation of this profound subject now as you promised, and may the giver of all good reward you.

MASTER What activity is known to originate in nature?
[F 3.27d] Attraction, retention, assimilation and excretion. (III, 44)

MASTER Which activity arises from the vegetal soul?
DISCIPLE Growth and reproduction. (III, 46)
MASTER What do growth and reproduction mean?
DISCIPLE Reproduction is to beget a being that is similar to self; growth is the motion of living parts from center toward extremes.
MASTER Attraction and excretion, however, mean that the alimentative parts move spatially by contrary motion. They must therefore belong to a single genus, along with the motion of growing parts from center toward extremes.
DISCIPLE So they must.
MASTER Assimilation means converting a nutritive substance away from its own form into that which is nourished. Hence this activity must belong to the same genus as reproduction.
DISCIPLE That also must be so.
MASTER That being so, one of the substances causing these activities must impress on another a potency by means of which it achieves its end.
DISCIPLE That’s the way it must be.
MASTER Now, whatever is more perfect acts upon what is less perfect and leaves its imprint.
DISCIPLE It does.
MASTER [F 3.28a] The act of nature is lower than that of the vegetal soul.
DISCIPLE What is the proof of that?
MASTER The proof lies in the vegetal soul’s movement throughout a body and in all its extremities. Nature does not do this. Furthermore, what nature alone acts upon is not so perfect as what the vegetal soul affects.

140 Cf. Aristotle, De anima, 413a 25.
DISCIPLE   Thanks to you I now understand that these activities belong to the same genus. But how do you interpret the retentive potency of the vegetal soul?

MASTER   Retention is a weakening and abatement of motion.

DISCIPLE   What is the proof?

MASTER   It is that motion is more powerful than rest. Therefore when there is motion there will be power; but when there is rest there will be weakness.

DISCIPLE   What have we achieved by this reasoning?

MASTER   What we have established is that the vegetal soul acts upon nature because it is higher and more powerful.

48  The functions of the Sensing and the Rational Soul and of Reason

The sensing soul acts on the vegetal soul to move parts to extremes and on an animal to cause sense-perception and movement. It is thus more powerful than the vegetal on which it acts. The function of the sensing soul is to bring about perception of dense bodies in time, movement in space and utterance of random sounds; that of the rational soul is perception of rational forms, time-free and space-free motion and utterance of sounds with meaning. Reason is even more elemental, and perceives true being.

DISCIPLE   You have now shown me the action of the vegetal soul on nature, and I understand how their activities belong to one and the same genus. Now please show me the action of the sensing on the vegetal soul and how their activities belong to one genus.

MASTER   What is the action of the sensing soul on the vegetal soul?

DISCIPLE   To move the vegetative parts toward the extremes.

MASTER   [F 3.28b] What is the sensing soul’s action in an animal?

DISCIPLE   Sense-perception and movement.

MASTER   Ought not both kinds of movement to belong to the same genus, inasmuch as both serve to move bodies in space?
DISCIPLE  They ought indeed.

MASTER  [F 3.28c] Since to move means for the sensing soul a change and alteration from one place to another for an entire object, while the vegetal soul’s motion is that of transferring parts without any translation of a whole from place to place, must not the sensing soul’s act be more powerful than that of the vegetal?

DISCIPLE  It must be so.

MASTER  [F 3.29] Furthermore, the sensing soul surpasses the vegetal because it unites whether from far or near with the forms of the bodies that equal it in refinement and withdraws them from their physical vehicles (see III, 31, end), while the vegetal soul unites with the true being of bodies since it matches them in density, and this it does only by proximity and continuity.

DISCIPLE  That is so.

MASTER  In that case the sensing soul must act on the vegetal, because it is higher and more powerful.

DISCIPLE  It must indeed.

MASTER  Now the teaching on the rational soul and reason is exactly as I have explained to you in the case of these three substances; and so to avoid prolixity and yet bring it out openly, I shall keep my discourse short.

DISCIPLE  Keep it short, then, but make it known to me completely, as is your custom.

MASTER  [F 30] The function of the sensing soul is sense-perception of dense physical forms in time, movement in space and utterance of sounds and rhythms without any order that signifies meaning. The function of the rational soul is perception of subtile rational forms, timeless and spaceless movement among rationals, and emission of sounds and rhythms in an order and sequence that signifies meaning. Finally, the function of reason is the perception of all rational forms free of time and space without inquiry, without effort and without any cause other than its own nature, since it exists in total perfection.
DISCIPLE    What proof is there that reason differs from the rational soul?

MASTER     Before going into that you should carefully peruse the proof that reason is a
substance. But that does not belong to our present pursuit. In fact the proof that reason is other
than the rational soul is the same as that the rational soul is other than the sensing and vegetal
souls (see III,41). Further evidence is that the rational soul perceives the exterior while reason
perceives the true being, which is more elemental than the surface. Consequently the form of
reason is more elemental than that of the rational soul.

49       Higher substances are more inclusive and more active

Reason acts on the rational soul and this on the sensing soul. Lower substances are
included in higher ones successively until primary, all-supporting universal matter is attained.
Understanding of elemental substances is fundamental to any knowledge of divinity.

(The Master continues) If you have understood this you can appreciate the action of
reason on the rational soul and of this on the sensing soul, and also how the activities of these
substances are similar and belong to one genus.

DISCIPLE    It seems to me that I have at last understood this, thanks to you. But I
should like to explain to you the idea that I have.

MASTER     Tell me how you see it.

DISCIPLE    I have found out that the substance of reason is the most ethereal and
perfect of intelligible substances, and that it sustains all form, relates to everything, perceives and
understands all things; and I have found the rational soul to be its inferior inasmuch as it sustains
some forms only, and fails to relate to or understand everything. The sensing soul I have found to
be inferior to the rational soul in the same way.

Now since the activities of each of these are similar and belong to the same genus, I
realized that the highest and most powerful of them is the effective cause in the lower and
weaker ones, as has already been mentioned concerning the other substances (III, 46).
MASTER    You have understood well. But what is the result of this?

DISCIPLE  That whatever is present in lower substances is also present in higher ones; but not that what is present in higher ones is also in the lower. For example, growth and reproduction are present in the sensing soul, but sense-perception and motion are missing from the vegetal soul; and sense-perception and motion are present in the rational soul but rationality and cognition are missing from the sensing soul.

I believe that this concept will apply all the way up to the science of universal matter and form, which embraces all form. From this it will be understood that the higher the substances are, the more inclusive, the more general and the more comprehensive of all forms they will be, all the way to the primary universal matter that sustains all things.

MASTER    You should deepen your knowledge of the action of these substances on each other, as has been our custom during this discussion.

DISCIPLE  What do you mean by that?

MASTER    I mean that you should concentrate your attention on confirming the existence of these substances, examining thoroughly the potencies of each one, identifying their functions, comparing the activities of each with those of others, differentiating the impressions of each on the others, determining what they have in common and in what they differ, and whatever inquiry concerning them may appertain to logical investigation, so that you may thereby be fully apprised of the similarity and generality that exists among them; that is to say, that they belong to a single genus.

Their interaction will then be clear to you, and you will identify the perfection of some according to the imperfection of others.
Furthermore what you ought to take into account is this: that to understand the elemental substances and grasp as much as possible of the science they represent constitutes the greatest recreation and pleasure of the rational soul. And in the measure of its grounding in understanding of them, its saturation with them, its perception of their forms and properties, and its awareness of their activities and passivities, it will be secure in its knowledge of Divinity and in its union therewith.

Be zealous, therefore, in exploring the elemental substances. Be ardent and eager most of all in the substance of the rational soul and reason, since they sustain all things and in them the forms of all things exist.

FINAL QUESTIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

50 The cause of motion

Consider the spheres in ascending order. The higher the spheres, the greater their encompassment, the more ethereal their nature, the more powerful their activity and the more elemental their motion. This is derived from the primary motion of the outermost cosmic sphere identified with the corpus universalis – which may be rendered either “universal body” or “the body of the universe” but is here rendered “the cosmic sphere” –LL, which is not itself self-caused.

DISCIPLE Now that you have opened the way to exploration of elemental substances and have encouraged me along the route that leads to an understanding of them, let us return to our earlier purpose, which was the identification of matter and form in the rationals just as we did in the sensibles.

MASTER Once your knowledge of the existence of rational substances is confirmed, that of matter and form will be almost self-evident to you. But do not hasten in your exploration of these substances nor allow your eagerness to speed you toward the others that still lie ahead, because your grasp of the former will be the measure of your mastery of the latter, which are yet to come, and the converse.

DISCIPLE I am truly convinced of the existence of these substances, both by the method of surveying their differing activities and by that of noting the similarity of these and their inclusion in the same genus. But now what I wish is for you to provide an overall rule governing all of these substances, and one that will improve my understanding of this subject.
MASTER Consider the nearest observable sphere and thence in ascending order, and you will find that the higher the spheres the greater their encompassment, the more ethereal their nature, the more potent their activity and the more uniform their motion.

DISCIPLE I have considered that and found it to be as you have said.

MASTER Observe also the motion of the cosmic sphere and of all those beneath it.

DISCIPLE I have observed them and have discovered that all of them move by virtue of the primary motion of the cosmic sphere.

MASTER Now from what you can see of the movement of the cosmic sphere, is this caused by its own mass, or by something else?

DISCIPLE I regard the cosmic sphere as having this motion of and by itself alone.

MASTER Can it be possible for the other masses beneath the cosmic sphere to lack self-motion as you have agreed, even though the cosmic sphere moves of and by itself?

DISCIPLE Why not?

MASTER If that is the case, then it will be possible for the nature of the cosmic sphere to diverge from that of the other inferior masses.

DISCIPLE But what proof is there that all the masses have the same nature?

MASTER The proof is that they all have a common motion.

DISCIPLE Is it your view, then, that for superior and inferior spheres to share a common motion means that they also share a common nature?

MASTER Just give attention to their continuance and duration, because here is where the difference lies.

DISCIPLE If all masses move by virtue of the motion of the cosmic sphere, how can they move in different directions, when the motion of the cosmic sphere is unitary and in one direction only?
MASTER    From this it becomes evident that the motion of the cosmic sphere is not self-caused.

DISCIPLE    How can that be?

MASTER    If its motion were self-caused, then none of the motion of any of the bodies impelled by it could deviate from its direction.

DISCIPLE    Don’t you see that this teaching on the cosmic sphere, that it is not self-moved, means that every mobile must have a mover, all the way to infinity?

MASTER    That statement is invalidated by the absence of mobiles at the lowest extreme, which also denies self-motion as well as that every movent moves something.\(^\text{141}\)

DISCIPLE    What will you reply if I turn around and suggest that the motion of the cosmic sphere is self-caused?

MASTER    I find this to be clearly wrong because of the points already discussed; and this will be shown even more clearly by means of the divergent motion of the bodies as well as by its presence or absence.

DISCIPLE    Please give me this clearer teaching.

MASTER    If the cosmic sphere is self-moved, it must be at once mover and movent.

DISCIPLE    How so?

MASTER    Because no part of it can be a mover only, or a movent only.

DISCIPLE    Why not?

MASTER    Well, if it is self-moved, how can part of it by immobile? Indeed, if it were self-moved, it would have to be both wholly moved and wholly a mover, which is impossible.\(^\text{142}\)

\(^{141}\) *Physics*, 256a 22.

\(^{142}\) These points are discussed in detail by Aristotle in *Physics*, VIII, 5.
**51 The inevitability of mediation**

The cosmic sphere cannot be self-impelled, nor can it be moved directly by the primary Mover. Here and elsewhere an intermediary is requisite.

DISCIPLE You have just shown me that it would be inadmissible for me to say that the cosmic sphere is wholly self-moved.

MASTER It would also follow that the motions of the parts of the cosmic sphere would not be in sequence with each other. The first motion would not impel the second, and as a result this would then be reacting to a non-mover.

DISCIPLE I have now been shown in four ways that the cosmic sphere cannot be self-impelled. But is there still some other way to show it?

MASTER Indeed there is yet another way in addition to those given, and it is to conceive of the celestial sphere (*caelum*) as having had a beginning and so not being imperishable.

DISCIPLE Now I understand, thanks to you. But if the celestial sphere is not self-impelled, may it not be possible for it to be moved directly by the primary Mover?

MASTER I did not think that you could believe that the celestial sphere, which is the substance that sustains the categories, would be moved directly by the primary Mover because of the logical proofs we gave of the two methods established as a guide for ascertaining the existence of elemental substances.

These are: by examining the attributes of the primary Creator and of the substance that sustains the categories, and by exploring the imprints and effects of these substances on others; and also by confirming that the substance that sustains the categories exists by virtue of another and different true being from which it springs. In this way you will realize that it does not spring from the primary Mover.
Furthermore, if what is dense can unite with what is volatile only by means of some intermediary that is congenial to both extremes and receives its imprint only through the intermediary; and as the human body receives the activity of the rational soul through the medium of the pneuma (III, 2, p.75); and as the human being receives reason through the medium of the rational soul, and as vision cannot unite with the body except through the eye and the vaporous air, and as the universal soul unites with bodies only through the celestial sphere that mediates between physical and spiritual bodies: in just this way can it also be shown that mediating substances lie between the substance that sustains the categories and the primary Creator.

DISCIPLE I cannot doubt, thanks to the convincing proofs you have brought forward, that intermediate substances lie between the substance of the categories and the primary Creator, but I should like you to increase my understanding of their nature. So please add to your explanation of this.

MASTER Would you not say that one sense-perceptible is higher than another and that the highest is above the lowest?

DISCIPLE How can I not?

MASTER What situation exists here?

DISCIPLE The lower is separated from the higher and so cannot have the same rank.

MASTER Do you not also believe that rational substance is higher and more rarefied than sense-known substance?

DISCIPLE I cannot deny that.

MASTER Do you not also believe that one rational substance is higher and more rarefied than another?

DISCIPLE Why should that be the case?

MASTER In the same way that one sensible is higher and more rarefied than another.

DISCIPLE So what is this leading to?

143 De anima II,7, 419a 13.
MASTER  [F 3.9] To what I shall now point out: if some perceptible bodies are superior to others, and the most excellent is superior to the least so, then the highest existent among the superiors must be the noblest and most excellent, while the lowest inferior will be entirely worthless.

DISCIPLE  It must be as you say.

MASTER  Consequently the relation between the highest sensible and the highest intelligible will be the same as between the lowest sensible and the lowest intelligible. In this way you will understand the presence of elemental substances that are intermediate between the primary Creator and the substance that sustains the categories.

52  Can substance generate substance?

Not the substances themselves, but their energies and qualities outflow, as light outflows from the sun, and these radiations are not beyond the concept of body.

DISCIPLE  The elemental substances have now been confirmed in the ways you have set forth. And yet I still feel some doubt with respect to them when I reflect on our statement that the forms that the substance underlying the categories bears have been imprinted by and derive from them. I perceive that reason is prepared to comprehend this and has no difficulty in granting it in view of the convincing proofs brought forward to demonstrate it since forms are accidents and there is nothing to prevent their being derived from elemental substances and being united with those (physical ones), just as sunlight is radiated from the sun and unites with bodies.

But how can I claim that elemental substances are derived from each other, and that the true being of the substance that sustains the categories is derived from an elemental substance of proximate rank?

MASTER  [F 3.10] It is not the intrinsicality of the elemental substances that pours forth but rather their energies and irradiations that emerge and diffuse. The true being of every one of these substances is circumscribed and confined, not extended to infinity; but their irradiations emerge from them and exceed their bounds and limits because of their inclusion within the primary effluence that outstreams from will (III, 13, latter part).
It is like the sunlight that outpours through the atmosphere having passed beyond the boundaries of the sun and spreads through the ambient air while the sun itself remains within its own confines; or like the vital energy that flows forth from the rational potency seated in the brain into the tendons and muscles whence it permeates and diffuses throughout the body, while the seat of the vitality itself neither permeates nor diffuses. In just this way any and every elemental substance spreads its irradiation and luminosity, diffusing it through what lies beneath yet remaining in its own place and within its own bounds.

DISCIPLE According to this doctrine, then, what outflows from elemental substances must be potencies and qualities, not the substances themselves.

MASTER I shall show you that the irradiations from any of these substances are not beyond the concept of body, even though they are potencies inasmuch as they radiate from them.

I maintain that cause is more worthy of the concept of body than effect. That being so, all the luminosity that flows from higher to lower falls short of the true and perfect concept of body in comparison with the primary substance that is its cause. Accordingly it will be said of these substances that they vary in the fullness of their concept of body, and so the higher among them will be more worthy of it than the lower.

But although the lower may not equal the higher in the concept of body, it is still not extraneous to it, because from the higher outflows a lower potency that is substance for what outflows from the higher. This lower is to a certain extent a potency of the higher substance in which it originates, and to a certain extent a substance for the potency that springs from it. This is why nothing prevents a substance from originating in a substance provided its source is an elemental one.

DISCIPLE Please explain this more fully.
53 Elemental substance can and does generate substance

Elemental substance is generative, and not being confined by quantity, nothing prevents the emergence of substance from it. Just as forms originate in forms, so do substances originate in substances.

MASTER It is self-evident that whatever springs from something else belongs to the same genus as that from which it springs even when not of the same rank. Since elemental substance is outgiving, what it gives out must also be a substance, even if the two substances are not of the same rank. And also, since the emergence of anything does not depend on its being an accident, nothing prevents the emergence of substance from substance. Moreover, the proof that its emergence does not depend on accident is this: that an actual accident does not outflow. What this reveals is that the outflow is by reason of the ethereality and potency of its radiance. And in view of the fact that accidents can transmit their true beings even though weaker than substances, how much more likely that substances will confer theirs!

Again, since what prevents bodies from originating in others is that quantity prohibits substance from communicating its true being because of its density and circumscription. Thus since elemental substances are not subject to quantity, there is no hindrance to the outflow of substances from them (III,15).

Furthermore, the potencies and accidents that spring from substances, for example luminosity, warmth and the like, arise from the potencies and accidents sustained in the substances and not from the true being of these. What this reveals is that every product resembles its source, and nothing brings forth anything that is not its similar. It must be the case, then, that what originates in elemental substance is its similar, which is to say an elemental substance.

In conclusion, if the higher failed to communicate their true being to the lower, they would fail to endow them with their own nominal being and description. But they do in fact communicate their own nominal being and description (III,18, #12), and so they do communicate their own true being.
But since the higher substances apportion their own true being to the lower ones and their true beings are substances, it becomes obvious in consequence that the true beings of the lower substances that have been acquired from the higher ones are indeed substances. And so again, just as forms originate in forms, so also do substances eventuate from substances (III,19, proof #24).

54 **SOURCE OF THE [RATIONAL] SOUL**

The rational soul differs but is not divided from reason its source; nor does reason diminish because of generating the rational soul any more than fire or sun diminish by radiating heat and light.

[NOTE: As in III, 28 and 37-42 the context of the discussion suggested that Gabirol’s discourse of “soul” was focused on the “sensing soul,” so here it is likely that the “rational soul” is alluded to. But the Latin *anima* says simply “soul,” and we are free to interpret accordingly. –LL]

DISCIPLE Please explain to me, since we have described the [rational] soul as originating in reason, whether it is separate from the essential nature of reason or within it. If separate, then it cannot originate there, but if it truly belongs within the true being of reason, then the two are not to be differentiated.

MASTER The soul emerges from the essentiality of reason as energy issues from a power source, and its existence is not within the essentiality. Indeed, its separateness from its essentiality does not preclude its having sprung from this, because whatever springs from anything comes forth from the essentiality of that thing and is severed from it in emerging.

In the same way, the soul comes from reason and forsakes the essentiality of reason in emerging. And the departure of the soul from reason is like (the departure of) potency from a power source in that it does not bar the soul from being a substance, since what outflows from reason is itself a substance, although it is also an accident in that it has been derived from another substance.

DISCIPLE Bear in mind that after the elemental substances spring from each other, the higher ones must themselves be diminished by the outflow of the lower.
MASTER  [F 3.11] When lower substances outflow from the true beings of higher ones as if by a discharge of energy from a power source and not by a loss of essentiality, it must be that the true beings of the higher substances are not diminished by generating lower ones. Similarly these energies or lower substances must not be separated from their essentialities even though they have sprung from them.

It is like the heat of a fire, which is not reduced nor separated from its source, even though it generates heat in the surrounding atmosphere. This is not the self-same heat, because the fire can be damped and yet the heat remains in the air; moreover the two substances differ, and so the heat that affects the atmosphere is not of the same potency as that of the fire.

In the same way, when sunlight is spread over the earth, the light sustained within the true being of the sun is not diminished although the radiance issues from it, and the luminosity that is spread over the earth is not the same as that which is held within the essentiality of the sun. Evidence of this lies in the diversity of the subjects (i.e. fire and air) and the differing strength and weakness of their brightness.

55 How can the divine power be more evident in some subjects than in others?

This power is not subject to limitation, but is omnipresent. The apparent difference lies in the receptivity of matter.

DISCIPLE  I am now convinced that the potencies that outpour from each and every elemental substance are, despite their being potencies and radiations of that from which they issue, nevertheless substances and identifiable as such because of their own intrinsic power and because other potencies outflow from them. My perplexity in this matter has been resolved.

But please clarify for me a certain matter that comes to mind, even if it is not part of what we are discussing: I have observed that [F 32] the more the elemental substances descend, the denser and thicker they become until they end up corporeal and definite. I have found the same to be the case with the compound substances.
Finally I have found the action of certain ones on others to be more manifest than that of the others. How, then, can the divine energy weaken, be transmuted and corporified? And how can the act of the supreme and holy Creator be more manifest in one substance than in another, when the divine omnipotence is the sum total of all power and the perfection and fulfillment of all authority and majesty?

MASTER [F 3.33a] The divine omnipotence cannot weaken, but because of their attraction to it some potencies rise up and their shadow falls on the lower ones.\(^{144}\)

DISCIPLE How can that be so?

MASTER Because any radiated potency is more powerful when closer to its source. Therefore the potency that radiates from the supreme and holy Creator must be most powerful in its proximity, and more so when closer than when farther and at a distance.

DISCIPLE Such variability is applicable to the potency of anything only when it is accidental, not intrinsic; and also when it is determinate, not illimitable. But the potency of the supreme Creator is intrinsic and illimitable. Hence it cannot be more intense near its source than at a distance. At this point, however, there are some ideas that I am not familiar with: for instance, how can anything be far from or near to a boundless reality that is not confined within space but exists in all and all in it equally?

MASTER It is true that the omnipotence of the supreme and holy Creator is intrinsic and illimitable, but the diversity of the forms in their increase and decrease does not necessitate any variation of the creative Power itself nor its limitation.

DISCIPLE But why not?

MASTER [F 3.33b] Because matter receives form from the creative Potency in accordance with its fitness to receive; indeed, if matter were capable of receiving a single unique and perfect form without any diversity, the divine omnipotence would not be found lacking in this.

DISCIPLE Why, then, did you tell me that the energy radiating from the supreme Creator is strongest when nearest?

\(^{144}\) See also V,32, end.
MASTER    Take care not to attribute the difference of potency to the nature of the
divine might, but rather to the nature of the recipient of its act.

DISCIPLE    How do you mean that?

MASTER    Since the matter that is closest to the outpouring of energy is better
prepared to receive its act than another more distant one, the manifestation of power in the
nearer should be stronger than in the farther. But this knowledge is not expressly a part of
our present task, since it will be included in the science of [the divine] Will.

56    The manifest exemplifies the unmanifest

_The parts of body have correspondence with the elemental substances and each ranges
from density to ethereality. Vision corresponds to reason, which alone can approach ultimate
reality._

DISCIPLE    All that you have brought out up until now is enough for confirming the
existence of the elemental substances. But please summarize the teaching you have given and
lead me to a shortcut for understanding it.

MASTER    [F 3.34] If what you want is to picture it all at once, raise yourself up
from lower to higher, whereupon you will see that existence is more rarefied, more
elemental, firmer and more unitary whether in the case of matter, form or motion. And
consider what is manifest to be evidence of what is unmanifest, what is compound to be
evidence of what is elemental, and what is an effect to be evidence of its cause. Carry this
out and you will win through to the concept you are searching for.

DISCIPLE    You have convinced me on this point. But how am I to picture the
arrangement of these substances and how they exist in relation to each other?

MASTER    You must always take sense-known realities as representing rational ones,
and then you will find it quite easy to picture the rational ones.

DISCIPLE    How am I to represent the arrangement of the rational substances?
[F 3.35] Take unconditioned universal body as your example of this, since that is how the lower reflects the higher; because if you contemplate the composition of unconditioned body and the arrangement of its parts, it will be easy for you to identify the classification of the elemental substances.

DISCIPLE Please show me the pattern of correspondences between the elemental substances and the parts of body.

MASTER [F 3.36] Place primary (universal) matter opposite the substance that sustains all the forms of body, because it is this matter that sustains all forms. Next place the substance of reason opposite quantity, because reason, having two capacities, is subject to division. And place the soul opposite shape, which confines quantity. And place nature opposite color, which is the final part of body, just as nature is the final elemental substance, and also the source of all color.

Now the more vision penetrates color and extends to shape, quantity and substance, the more existence is concealed and obscured and hidden from it because of its tenuousness; and contrariwise the more vision returns and withdraws from substance to quantity, from quantity to shape and from shape to color, the more evident existence becomes to it because of its density. In just this way, the more reason penetrates beyond the substance that sustains the categories into the spiritual substances and attains to the primary matter that corresponds to substance, the more existence is obscured and hidden from it because of its tenuousness; and contrariwise, the more it withdraws from the primary matter toward the nearer substances, the clearer and more evident existence becomes because of its density. This paradigm that I have suggested will make it easier for you to identify the classification of spiritual substances in terms of their levels. (Cf. I,11)

[F 3.37] All in all, when you wish to visualize these substances, how your own true being spreads through them and how it encompasses them, you must elevate your reason to the highest intelligible, cleanse and purify it of all meanness of sense, and release it from enslavement to materiality (Cf. 172; V,1 and 43). By the potency of your reason you must approach the ultimate possible perception of the reality of rational substance and as it were divest it of sensible substance until you are as if unaware of it.
At that point it will seem that you are embracing the whole physical universe within your own true being and you will place it as if within a single recess of your consciousness. Once you have done this, you will realize that the sensible is minuscule relative to the grandeur of the rational (Cf. V,30).

The spiritual substances will then be found near at hand. In your mind’s eye you will contemplate them around and above you, and you will see your own true being as if you were indeed those very substances. At one time you will believe that you are merely a part of them because of your tie to physical substance, but at another you will regard yourself as the whole of them with no distinction between you and them, because of the union of your true being with theirs and the joining of your form with theirs.

57 QUESTIONS ON THE ELEMENTAL SUBSTANCES

A glimpse of the realm of rational substances and of primary universal matter. The relation between the illimitable and the limited. Reasoned purpose (= “Will”) is illimitable and yet creative in the realm of limitation. Examples of the union of spiritual substances with physical ones. The greater inclusiveness of the spiritual. The relations between particular substances as key to the relations between universal ones.

DISCIPLE I have now carried out your assignment and raised myself through the levels of the rational substances; I have wandered in their exquisite loveliness; and I have found that in comparison with them the sense-perceptible bodies are utterly paltry and deficient. I saw the whole physical universe floating in them like a skiff on the sea or a bird in the air.

MASTER [F 38] Well observed and well understood! But if you raise yourself to the level of primary universal matter and illumine its shadow, there you will be witness to the wonder of all wonders. Apply yourself therefore to this with zeal and with love, because it is this for which human life exists, and in it is the abode of supreme delight and insurpassable happiness.
DISCIPLE Please tell me whether the potencies of these substances are limited or illimitable; and if limited, how did they gain existence from an illimitable potency? If on the other hand they are illimitable, how could anything limited come into existence from them?

MASTER [F 3.39] Will without doubt is the potency that creates these substances. It is limited in its effect but illimitable in its true being. This being so, its effect will be subject to limitation. It is limited in its effect because its act has a beginning and therefore follows after will, which itself is illimitable in true being because it is without beginning. The converse is true of reason because it does have a beginning, having been caused; but it is without end, inasmuch as it is elemental and not subject to time.

DISCIPLE Blessings on you! Now please show me how to envision the union of these spiritual substances with physical ones and with each other.

MASTER [F 3.40] Observe the union of light with air, or of the soul with the physical body, or of reason with the soul, and the joining of bodily parts with each other, and their disposition of shape, color, quantity and substance. Bear in mind in this connection the union of accident with body, of accident with soul, and of soul with the physical body as evidence of the union of spiritual substances with each other. And note that the union increases in the measure of the rarefaction of body, as confirmation of the same.

DISCIPLE I have often heard the spiritual substances called circles or wheels by the philosophers, and yet it is obvious that the figure of a circle or wheel belongs to body only.

MASTER [F 3.41] Do not wonder at that. These substances were called circles or wheels because some are higher than others and encompass them.

DISCIPLE What is the meaning of height in this sense, and encompassment?

MASTER It refers to the fact that the sustainer includes the sustained, the cause the effect, and the knower the known.
DISCIPLE Can some evidence of this inclusiveness be found in particular substances, to enable us to form a judgment (of the universals)?

MASTER [F 3.42] Observe the potency of nature. We find it inclusive of body because it acts on it, while the latter is passive to the former and clothed by it. Observe also the vegetal soul, and you will find that it acts on nature and controls it, while nature is passive to its action and included by it. In similar fashion observe reason and the rational soul, and you will note that each includes, knows, permeates and controls whatever substance is below it. This is true especially of reason because of its ethereality and perfection.

From these particular substances you will infer that universal substances also include one another, and all of them include compound substance in this way; that is, as the soul includes the body and reason the soul; in other words as a lower substance is contained within a higher that in turn sustains and knows it.

And the universal soul\textsuperscript{145} sustains the whole physical universe. It envisages and beholds all that lies within it, just as our individual souls sustain our bodies, envisaging and beholding all that lies within them. Above all is this true of universal reason, in accordance with its perfection, its amplitude and the excellence of its substance.

In this way the relation of the knowledge of the high and holy primary Creator to all things will be revealed to you, as well as the way in which all things are established within its knowledge.

And now please understand that just as the true being and form of body corresponds to the true being and form of spiritual substance, so too does the inclusiveness of spiritual substance correspond to that of corporeal substance, exactly as you have so often been taught that the lower is counterpart of the higher.

\textsuperscript{145} Jacob here renders \textit{anima} “life-principle” for the universal soul, and “animating principle” for the individual soul. – LL
[F 3.43] Since this is so, it is clear that when we say that spiritual substance includes corporeal, this means that the existence of corporeal substance is held and contained within it, just as the existence of all bodies is established and contained within that of the celestial sphere; and the return or recurrence of spiritual substance to itself continuously and permanently reflects the cycles of the celestial sphere with its changes and recurrences.

58 Man the measure of the universe

The human body epitomizes the cosmos; reason orders and controls both, with lower substances conforming to higher all the way up to reason. Human life reflects the order of the universe.

DISCIPLE Please explain further.

MASTER [F 3.44a] If you wish to visualize the fabric of the whole, that is, the celestial sphere and the spiritual substances that envelop it. Consider the quality of man, for therein you will find a model. The human body corresponds to the celestial sphere; the spiritual substances that activate it are analogous to the universal substances that propel the celestial sphere, with any lower substance responsive and obedient to a higher, until the motion reaches all the way to the substance of reason. At that point you will find that reason is disposing and controlling them, and that all the substances that activate the human body follow and obey it, while it in turn takes hold of and rules them.

DISCIPLE You have just unveiled for me a lofty mystery and a boundless concept in that the lower motion of universal substances takes place by virtue of the motion of their superiors, and that their submission and obedience to these is in consequence of that until the (cause of) motion reaches the supreme substance.

Thus all substances are found to be subject and obedient to that, following it and responding to its command. I am convinced that the course of human life conforms to the order of the universe; and if the present discussion succeeded in nothing else, it was fully adequate because it embodies the concept of universal activity and passivity, which constitute the ultimate goal of philosophy.
MASTER    You have quite properly understood from my instruction that lower substances conform to higher ones. But please understand in addition that [F 3.44b] this is the path that leads to fullest happiness and the achievement of truest joy, which is the purpose of our endeavor.

DISCIPLE    What you have established for me in this third book is the existence of rational substances, something that no one but you could divulge, and I have gained an understanding of them that no one but me has achieved, to the extent of my ability, and a foundation for reflection on this subject.

And now let us make a start in book four on the survey of matter and form, since that is our aim, and demonstrate the truth of what you taught before (II,24, end), that matter and form are to be found at the rational level exactly as they are at the sensible.
1 Spiritual substances are identical in matter but varied in form

The nature of any lower reveals that of the higher from which it originates. Thus, since physical spheres possess matter and form, spiritual ones must also do so. These are identical in matter but dissimilar in form.

MASTER In the preceding discussions the existence of matter and form in compound substances has been revealed to you, and in the treatise just completed you have been shown the existence of elemental substances by the requisite proofs. Now if you wish to understand the existence of matter and form in elemental substances, remember the instruction given you on compound substances, because the method of bringing to light an understanding of matter and form is the same for both.

DISCIPLE How can that be?

MASTER [Falaquera 4.1] If the lower originates in the higher, then all that exists in the lower must exist in the higher.

DISCIPLE You seem to be suggesting that physical spheres are in the likeness of spiritual ones and originate in them.

MASTER That is what I intended.

DISCIPLE Is it your belief that if physical spheres have matter and form, spiritual ones will therefore be like them?

MASTER It cannot be otherwise.
DISCIPLE  What is the proof of that?

MASTER  Proof that spiritual substances are identical in matter but varied in form is this: since their effects differ, their forms undoubtedly differ; but their matters cannot possibly be separate inasmuch as all are elemental and spiritual. Difference arises from form, and elemental matter is without inherent form.

DISCIPLE  What will your answer be if I propose that the substance of the soul is matter and that of reason is form?

MASTER  The substance of the soul cannot be matter because it is compound, reason is its superior, and it is active. And correspondingly the substance of reason cannot be a form since it also is compound. This is evidenced by their homogeneity with other elemental substances in point of body and their difference in point of knowledge and perfection.

DISCIPLE  What will you reply if I take the view that these substances are nothing but matter?

MASTER  If that were so they would be undifferentiated, definitely unitary and inactive, since the matter of anything was a unity without diversification, and since actions arise from forms, not from matters, as is evident in sense-perceptibles.

DISCIPLE  But what if these substances are only forms?

MASTER  How can forms be sustained without any sustainer?

DISCIPLE  Why not, since they are substances?

MASTER  If these elemental substances are a single form, how have they become differentiated?

DISCIPLE  Could they not just be different in themselves?

MASTER  If they were, they would never combine at all.

DISCIPLE  Therefore they vary in perfection and imperfection.

MASTER  If they differed in that way, in perfection and imperfection, there would have to be something sustaining the perfection and the imperfection.
DISCIPLE  What sustains perfection is form and what sustains imperfection is also form.

MASTER  And so forms are now matters, inasmuch as they are sustainer.

2  Spiritual substance as revealed by physical; and the source of diversity

Rational substance must therefore consist of matter and form just as body does, which is not unlike the division of spiritual substance into reason and soul. Therefore the nature of each of these elemental substances as a subdivision of spiritual substance may be compared to elemental matter and form as they subdivide physical substance. Differences are found in spiritual forms based on the quality of the matter that sustains them.

DISCIPLE  I now understand from the preceding teaching that elemental substances are composed of matter and form. But please clarify further.

MASTER  It is certainly impossible in the light of all this for rational substance to be a single reality, but also impossible for it to be two matters or two forms. Consequently it must be just matter and form alone.

DISCIPLE  But how can spiritual substance possibly be compound when it is spiritual?

MASTER  Inasmuch as the concept of spirituality must surpass that of corporeity, and this latter must be sustained in another that encircles it, spiritual substance will correspondingly be composed in the same way. Moreover the separation of spiritual substance into reason and soul in bodies and their distinction from each other is evidence of the separateness of matter from form.

Therefore the nature of each of these elemental substances as a subdivision of spiritual substance will be comparable to the nature of elemental matter and form in their separateness from physical substance. Furthermore, the fact that one spiritual entity is more elemental and more perfect than another shows that above the super-physical transcendence yet another and even more perfect one exists.
Certainly if spirituality impeded separateness, the soul could not be separate from reason nor could one be more spiritual than the other. Consequently the distinction between the soul and reason demonstrates that the spiritual realm is not a unity, and not being a unity it is subject to division and diversity.

I shall add further clarification of this by saying that just as one body has to be more elemental than another, with its matter and form more nearly approaching spirituality and elementality, so also must one spiritual substance be more elemental than another and its matter and form more markedly elemental and more notably spiritual.

It is not easy for me to imagine these elemental substances as composed of matter and form and to picture variety and difference among them, since all of them are spiritual and elemental.

Since it is hard for you to imagine the spiritual substances as composed of these two, consider their difference from the compound substances and their diversity among themselves, and then you will have to admit the differentiae by which they deviate from those and from each other. It is these forms that establish such differentiae.

Even if the differentiae of spiritual substances must be admitted because of their constituent forms, nevertheless how can it be necessary to admit differentiae of forms, since these exist in the highest degree of spirituality?

You must exercise great care on this point since here the error is no minor one. What you ought to imagine relative to spiritual forms is this: that all of them consist of one form only (III, 26, end), with no difference among them by reason of themselves. They are purely and simply spiritual, and no diversity touches them except by virtue of the matter that sustains them. If this lies close to Perfection, it will be rarefied and the form sustained in it will possess elementality and spirituality in the highest degree and the converse.
Take sunlight as an example. In and of itself it is a unity; but if it encounters a clear and rare atmosphere, it will penetrate this and will be revealed in another and different way than in dense, murky air. The same is true of form.

3  The divisibility of the transcendent

How can there be different elemental substances? How can the matter-form composition apply to them? It is by form alone that difference can be identified, and form requires support.

DISCIPLE  How will you reply if I propose that one spiritual substance does not differ from another because of substantial form, but rather a passivity befalls it because of the diversity of the bodies that receive its activity, and then this difference affects its action but not its substance in itself.

MASTER  I never thought you would react in this way on account of doubt, in view of the proofs already given of the attribution of diversity to the elemental substances, as if you were not convinced that the form of nature differs from that of the vegetal soul, as this differs from that of the sensing soul, this in turn from that of the rational soul, and this from the form of reason.

DISCIPLE  Well, I am actually convinced of the difference among elemental substances, although it may be that some other doubt will come up. But how about spiritual substance? Can you put my mind at rest about the difference found there? I shall be very curious about that.

MASTER  When this uncertainty supervenes, recall to mind some praiseworthy and honorable spiritual events, and you will then find that these events redirect the rational soul away from what was, to become what was not because of the advent of this rarefied form, this accident; and while you are holding this idea in mind, you will counter with it the idea that made you doubt, expel it, and establish its contrary.

DISCIPLE  Up till now I have felt a good deal of doubt about the separation of elemental substance into matter and form and how each differs from the other; so much so that I reject the possibility of dividing anything that is spiritual. So please provide a teaching adequate to banish this doubt.
MASTER  Against the first doubt set the difference between spiritual and physical substance and the difference among spiritual substances; and against the second, place the diversity of the substance of the soul within itself because of the accidents that come into being within it.

And reflect on this further point: whatever you have learned by sense or reason you learned only as its form perfected its matter, and thus that very form must have a sustainer for which it can be the form. And only when you have identified its form by reason will you form a (true) judgment of a spiritual substance; that is, what that is by virtue of which it has been created as what it is, as possessed of a matter that sustains such a form.

4  Matter and form in spiritual substances

The higher is found in the lower. Reason differentiates between forms and bodies. Elemental and compound are relative terms. Neither matter nor form can exist alone. Summary.

DISCIPLE  I am now convinced because of the explanations you have provided that spiritual substance is made up of matter and form. But is there still some further way to clarify this?

MASTER  [F 4.3] Yes, and one that will make it abundantly clear that elemental substances, which are superior to compound ones, are composed of matter and form. I have often stated that the lower derives from the higher and is a representation of it, for if the lower is out of the higher, the order of physical substances must be in the image of the order of spiritual ones.

And so just as physical substance falls into three categories or dense, rarefied and the matter and form of which they consist, so also is spiritual substance found in three categories: first, the spiritual substance that is next after the physical, then the one that surpasses this in spirituality, and finally the matter and form of which they are made up.

---

See II, 7; III, 33, 56, 57.
DISCIPLE  But please reveal to me that the higher has existence in the lower by a straightforward disclosure that will confirm this idea.

MASTER  The proof that all spiritual substances and forms have existence in physical ones, that is, their true beings and activities, is this: all that is general to the properties of things is to be found in them. [F 4.4] When a higher property is found in a lower, must not any that is similarly lower than it also be found in it? Certainly it is taught in logic that superiors give to inferiors their nominal being and definition, and this is the same case.

DISCIPLE  It is indeed.

MASTER  And it also reveals this: that reason differentiates between forms and bodies. Here is proof that its form is compatible with all forms as shown by earlier proofs that the forms sustained in compound substances derive from elemental ones (III, 17).

DISCIPLE  You have already made clear that spiritual substances cannot be matter only nor form only. But how am I to consider them as elemental when they are composed of matter and form?

MASTER  That was already answered in a previous discussion. Nevertheless I shall explain further by pointing out that [F 4.5] since it is not impossible for a compound to be elemental, so also is it not impossible for an elemental to be compound, and here is the reason: what is compound is elemental to its inferior, and what is elemental is compound to its superior.

DISCIPLE  But please observe that since the matter in elemental substances differs from their form, the matter could exist briefly without the form, being different and essentially contrary to it, or else it could not. But how will matter and form be truly different if neither of them can exist even briefly without the other?
MASTER Just wait a little and hold back your questions until we take up universal matter and form themselves.

DISCIPLE What then have we been discussing up until now?

MASTER Was it not your inquiry whether in the rational realm anything but matter and form exist, just as in the sensible realm nothing exists apart from them? And I certainly demonstrated that rational substances consist of matter and form in that they differed in one respect but coincided in the other. I also showed the same by other methods and disproved that they are matter only or form only (IV,1). In this way you acquired an understanding of whether matter and form are found in elemental substances.

Subsequently, we determined the essential being of each and considered in what way each differs from the other. Accordingly you gathered knowledge of whether they existed, what they were, and of what kind. But as to why they exist, you will ascertain that from the quality of universal matter and universal form, which we have not explored in this discussion since our purpose was to deal only with the matters of the spiritual substances.

We took as an instance of identifying matter and form in each one of the spiritual substances the matter of particular reason and its form; and I used this as a guide for determining the substance of universal reason and the other universal substances that are found under it.

DISCIPLE How is this done?

MASTER [F 4.6] Since particular reason is composed of matter and form, universal reason must also be so composed. In this matter we assess universal reason by means of particular reason, exactly as we appraised the existence of universal reason through particular reason.

5 Disposition of universal matters and forms

The arrangement of universal matters and forms, leading to the perception that the lower is derived from the higher, the sensible from the rational, and that both consist of matter and form. Matter cannot exist alone.
DISCIPLE      So then what shall we do?

MASTER      Since we have established that each and every elemental substance is a composite of matter and form, and in consequence that reason too is made up of them, we ought therefore to consider the arrangement of the matters of these universal substances and align them with each other, and similarly order and align their forms, as we have done with the matters and forms of sensible substances (I, 17); and then when the matters and forms of these rational substances are in order and the parts of spiritual matter and of spiritual form seem to be brought into unity for us, we can one by one look for the correspondence between spiritual and corporeal matter and between spiritual and corporeal form. Once we have done this, the parts of universal matter and of universal form will form a unity for us; and when this unification has been accomplished, we shall thereupon consider them together (IV,15).

DISCIPLE      The way it appears to you is certainly right. But let us complete the discussion we were having earlier of the idea that no property affects matter alone but always matter and form together. Please help me to understand whether matter at any time had existence apart from form and subsequently became invested with it.

MASTER      What is your purpose in asking?

DISCIPLE      In order to know whether matter has self-existence or not.

MASTER      [F 4.7] Know only that matter has no existence apart from form, because existence depends on form.

DISCIPLE      What evidence is there for that?

MASTER      Here is the proof: existence is either sensate or rational, and sense and reason act only on sensate or rational form.

DISCIPLE      Why is that?

MASTER      Because sensate and rational forms are interposed between the forms of sense and reason and the matters that sustain such forms. This is because forms combine only with forms, since it is these that encounter and join with each other as fully compatible and of the same genus.
DISCIPLE  I understand. But my question was not about the existence of matter in reason, for I know that reason perceives its object by joining its form with that of the object; rather, I was inquiring about the existence of matter in and of itself, since if, as you say, the existence of anything depends on form, how in the world will matter be said to have existence?

MASTER  Just hold back a bit and don’t be in a hurry until we come to the point of dealing with universal matter alone, at which time we shall discuss its characteristics and whatever can be said about them. [F 4.8] Let us, then, return to where we were, to the proposition that rationals consist of matter and form.

I shall repeat, therefore, what I have made clear to you in the preceding instruction, which is that the lower has been derived from the higher. Thus sensible spheres must originate in rational spheres, and these must also consist of matter and and form just as the sensible ones do. It is now abundantly clear that spiritual substance cannot be matter alone nor form alone, but rather is composed of both.

6 The necessity of matter and form throughout creation

Matter is the principle by which all things are alike. But in thought, the reason seeks to attain first the genus wherein things agree, which is matter, and also specify wherein things differ, which is form. Hence the nature of intellection proves that matter is involved in the very act of thought.

DISCIPLE  It is clear to me now in this way.

MASTER  It can also be brought out for you in a different way, which is that rational substances are at one in that they coincide in one way but differ in another; from which (we understand that) they coincide as to matter but differ as to form.

DISCIPLE  This certainly makes it obvious.
MASTER  I shall show you again in another way, which is this: The Creator of all things must be one only, and the creation must differ from him. Thus if the creation were matter only or form only it would then coincide with the One with nothing between them, since after the one is the two. 147

DISCIPLE  If some one objects that matter is one only and form one only, how will you answer?

MASTER  How can matter be one when it is compounded with form and is subject to change and division? Or how can form be one when it is compounded with matter and is also subject to change and division?

DISCIPLE  I see now that matter and form exist in the ways you have described. But is there still some other way to show this more fully?

MASTER  [F 4.9] It can also be shown quite well in this way: things are neither divergent nor uniform in all respects, and so any rational can be divided into two, i.e. form and that which receives form; and reason cannot grasp anything that does not have matter and form.

DISCIPLE  How do you know that reason can grasp only what is possessed of matter and form?

MASTER  I know because the ultimate goal of reason is the perception of genus and differentia, and herein lies the proof that matter and form are the ultimate reality. Furthermore, when reason perceives anything it does so by comprising that thing within itself, but this it cannot do unless its object is limited relative to itself. Nothing is limited, however, except by its form since anything indeterminate can have no form by which to become a unity and be distinguishable from others. This is why the eternal Existent is illimitable, because of being without form.

DISCIPLE  I judge from what you have explained that anything created has by its very finiteness a form by virtue of which it has become limited.

147 Cf. Plotinus V, iii, 15, and VI, vii, 8.
MASTER   You have understood perfectly. But you must further understand that this is why matter has form: because what has been created must be bounded and it cannot be bounded unless it is structured by form. Along with this you must understand that every rational substance has both form and matter. [F 4.10] But what is most incontrovertible in this connection is what I shall now reveal: if a part is part of a whole, the parts of things are unquestionably representative of their whole; and since the parts consist of matter and form, the whole will also be so constituted.

Now in order to make it even clearer that all things are to be reduced to matter and form, I shall put forward the following: everything that can be reduced must of necessity be resolved either into one root principle or more than one. If all were resolved into one, there would be no difference between that one root principle and the one Creator. In addition, that one root principle would have to be either matter only or form only. If matter only, no forms could be created for it, and if none were created, they would not exist. If on the other hand it were form only, it could have no authentic existence, nor similarly could matters come into being by means of it.

Furthermore, the single root principle must of necessity be matter, or form, or neither. If matter only or form only, the consequence has already been stated; and if neither of them, it will be either the primary Creator or another. But it cannot be the primary Creator nor indeed any other since it is neither matter nor form and apart from the primary Creator nothing exists but matter and form.

If however all things are resolved into a root component that is more than one, these will be either two or several. If two, they must be two matters only or two forms only, or one matter and one form, or neither two matters nor two forms. But they cannot be two matters nor two forms, nor indeed two non-matters and two non-forms. What remains, therefore, is that one of them is matter and the other is form.
If, on the other hand, they are more than two, that multiplicity either can be resolved into two, or else cannot. If it can, then the root principles are two; but if the several cannot be reduced to two and the nature of the several is contrary to that of the two, then there will of necessity exist another beyond the high and holy primary Creator, one that is neither matter nor form. But after the primary Creator nothing else exists other than matter and form.

[F 4.11] Now, that the whole system of things is made up of matter and form will also be shown by the fact that the body found at the very lowest extreme is composed of matter and form and is thus a three-dimensional substance. And if the entire universe stretches continuously from the highest to the lowest extreme and the lowest is composed of matter and form, this establishes that the whole of existence from highest to lowest is also composed of matter and form.

7 The matter and form of rational substances

Whether in rationals or sensibles, only matter and form exist, and the two realms correspond to each other exactly. But can a single matter have numerous forms?

DISCIPLE It is certainly clear now that nothing but matter and form is to be found in the rationals; indeed, it in most certain that in the whole of creation these two alone exist.

MASTER The time has now come for me to discharge my promise to tabulate the rational matters and forms relative to each other (IV,5) until it becomes fully evident to you that rational substances also possess universal matter and universal form.

DISCIPLE Please, then, begin with that.

MASTER Have you actually become truly convinced that each and every rational substance consists of matter and form?

DISCIPLE That has certainly been demonstrated to me in many ways.
MASTER But all these rational matters and forms concur within the meaning of matter and form. They will therefore become universal, as in the case of the sensibles; because if particular matters participate in the meaning of matter in that all are matters, then what they have in common must be universal matter. Similarly, if particular forms participate in the meaning of spirituality in that they are all forms, then what they have in common must be universal form. Accordingly, then, in the rational realm a universal matter must exist that sustains all rational forms, and also a universal form that similarly sustains all rational forms.\textsuperscript{148}

Now, just as the parts of matters and of forms in the rational realm correspond to the matters and forms in the sensible realm, each with another, until out of these are formed universal sensible matter, universal sensible form, universal rational matter and universal rational form, exactly similar to this will be the correspondence between universal rational matter and universal sensible matter, and universal rational form with universal sensible form. Both matters will become a single matter and both forms a single form. And just at that point, when the matter of the rationals combines with that of the sensibles to become one matter, and the form of the rationals combines with that of the sensibles to become one form, what conclusion is to be drawn?

DISCIPLE Just what you have already stated: that in the rational realm as in the sensible nothing but matter and form exists.\textsuperscript{149} But in order to complete my understanding of the meaning of this beyond any doubt, please disclose to me the concept of the ordering and combining of each of these matters and forms and reveal to me where this ought to take place. I wish to corroborate this only in order to understand your teaching fully.

MASTER You seem to be of the opinion that each of these forms occupies a matter separately, and since forms are many and varied, matters must also be diversified and multiple.

DISCIPLE That is certainly my opinion.

MASTER And so in your view, a variety of forms ought not to accrue to a single matter. Yet you observe in both artificial and natural realms that many different forms come successively to one and the same matter.

\textsuperscript{148} The idea that form supports form is found also in V,13.

\textsuperscript{149} II, 24; III, 58; IV, 4.
8 The nature of body

What is more corporeal is form for what is more elemental; what is manifest is form for what is unmanifest; and the more unmanifest anything is, the more it is like matter. Absolute materiality is found only in primary elemental matter, which supports all forms and matters.

DISCIPLE That is certainly what I see -- forms actually following one another in this matter. But I do not see the same in the matter of the celestial spheres nor in that of the rational substances.

MASTER Do you believe, because of the separability or inseparability of form from matter, that one and the same matter cannot lend itself to an inseparable form as to a separable one?

DISCIPLE Why should I not?

MASTER Because you see a variety of forms in the same matter, and certain of them are inseparable.

DISCIPLE That’s right. But what can you say of the matter of the rational substances? Can that actually be the matter of the rational substances?

MASTER Since you do not distinguish between the matter of the celestial spheres and that of nature in its true being, although the forms of the individual matters differ as to separability and inseparability, then you should certainly not distinguish between any of these and the matter of the rational substances.

DISCIPLE How can I not distinguish between them when there is as much difference as between spirituality and corporeity?

MASTER You appear convinced that the real matter of the celestial spheres and of the elements is corporeal.

DISCIPLE Yes, I am convinced of it.
MASTER      How can you be, when you know that corporeity is a form that requires a matter to sustain it?

DISCIPLE    Please explain how that is true.

MASTER      [F 4.12] Let us assume that there are three matters. One is elemental spiritual matter, the most elemental of all, which does not require form; another is compound physical matter, the most corporeal of all; and the remaining one is intermediate.

DISCIPLE    These exist, precisely as you have assumed. But what was your concept of a primary matter that does not require form, and why did you specify this?

MASTER      Because matter that requires form is definitely elemental and spiritual but differs from that which does not require form – according to Plato (Timaeus #50).

[F 4.13] But do you realize that physical matter, which is the quantity that sustains the form of color and shape, is not the physical form that sustains it in the way that quality, which is color and shape, is the form for it?

DISCIPLE    Yes, that is true.

MASTER      Or just as body alone and unadorned, which is more elemental than the body of the qualities, is the matter that sustains quality, may not this similarly be the form of another matter that is even more elemental than it and therefore can be resolved into it?

DISCIPLE    That also should be true.

MASTER      Consequently, from this point of view whichever is more corporeal should be form or the more elemental, until this process of resolution reaches totally elemental matter.

DISCIPLE    That is just as you said. But how does your answer correspond to what I asked?
MASTER You doubted that the matter of rational substances and that of sensible ones could be the same because you supposed that the matter of elemental substances was physical. For that reason I made clear to you that manifest existence is form for unmanifest, and because of that the matter of physical substances must be the form for what is spiritual since it can be resolved into this, even though it is matter for what is more corporeal than itself.

I explained that manifest existence is form for unmanifest, since the closer matter lies to sense the more form-like it is and thus will be more evident because of the visibility of form and the imperceptibility of matter notwithstanding its being the matter for sensible form. And the farther removed it is from sense, the more similar to matter and so the more indiscernible in consonance with the concealment of matter, even when it is form for primary elemental matter or for any matter that is inferior to itself.

Now if physical matter is as I have said, you must understand that it is truly reduced to materiality only in the primary elemental matter that sustains all forms and matters. This is what we have established so far in this ongoing inquiry.

9 The nature of universal primary matter

Any substance that is matter for a lower is form for a higher, until a primary matter is reached that sustains all. Diversity, therefore, occurs not because of matter but because of form. [NOTE: Recall the quarks-thru-planet chain-of-being analogy in our note to II, 1 (p. 28), and that “higher” means more elemental and “lower” more complex. “Molecule” will then be “form” relative to the (“higher”) atoms that comprise it, while it is itself “matter” to the (“lower”) organic cells and organisms which combine various molecules in ever-more-complex forms, etc. And any intermediate member of the series exhibits the same duality. – LL]

DISCIPLE I have now learned from the previous discussion that any lower substance is form for a higher, and any higher one is matter that sustains a lower, until in this way the absolutely elemental primary matter is reached.

MASTER Rightly so. But what is the corollary?

DISCIPLE That the primary matter that supports the universe is one. And so, may the Giver of all good bestow great favor on you, since by your explanation you have lifted a great uncertainty from my mind.
MASTER      How did my explanation bring you to this realization?

DISCIPLE    When I realized that any substance that is matter for a lower is form for a higher, this made it obvious that all substances are substrata, and if they are substrate matters that support something in the sense that a more ethereal substance is substratum for a denser one, then all forms are sustained in primary matter.

I also learned that they one and all require a matter to support them, which means they are limited and confined by a single boundary. It was therefore necessary then to posit a primary matter to sustain them all, which is the universal primary matter that was our objective. This was what enabled me to realize that the diversity to be found among substances is not consequent on matter but rather on form, since forms are many but matter is one.

MASTER      How well you have learned! But now you may raise any questions that seem good to you.

10   The unity of primary universal matter and its relation to primary universal form

Primary universal matter is a unity, and its properties and markings are present throughout the universe. Things do not converge into a unity if they do not share a common matter. Neither matter nor form can exist without the other; each of these endows the other with existence. Unity is the form of matter and imparts existence to matter.

DISCIPLE    You have now made clear to me that [F 4.15] the primary all-sustaining matter is one, by bringing together the matters of the sensate and the rational realms, with the result that all of them have become one single matter.

MASTER      You should also bear in mind what has already been discussed of the inquiry into the science of primary universal matter: that if a whole has a given matter, then the properties of this are to be found throughout the whole. Now if you will survey all substances, you will find in them the properties and markings of primary matter.
In other words, body is a substance that sustains many varied forms, chief of which are nature and the sense-known souls, since these impart forms to body; equally the rational soul and reason, since all forms are present in them.

Now generally speaking, as we ascend the scale of being all substances include more and more forms and assimilate more to the primary matter that sustains all forms than do the other lower substances. As you contemplate these properties in substances and note that the higher and closer to the upper extreme any substance is, the more firmly fixed and established these properties are in it, then it will become self-evident to you that these properties originate in and are acquired from primary universal matter, which is common to all substances, environs them and endows them with its own nominal being and description.

Furthermore, if you take into account that all multiples tend toward unity, this will show you that the all-sustaining matter is one; that multiple parts would not tend to unite unless their containing and embracing whole were one.

Again, if you give thought to the mutual relation of all things and their convergence into one, you will be unable to escape the conclusion that a universal something exists that is common to all and in which all participate, since if they did not share in that common something they would not come together nor join in anything. The diversity of their roots prevents intermingling of their branches.

Now add to this the idea of species that differ in their genus. Such species, being of separate genera, could not possibly converge in one common genus. Moreover, bear in mind that substance and absolute accident as contraries cannot possibly merge in a single genus because of the separateness of their true beings. Similarly you will realize that things are incapable of becoming unified if they do not share a common matter.

DISCIPLE   You have now shown me that primary universal matter is a unity. In view of this, then, please make clear that primary universal form is a unity, and enumerate for me its different forms as you did the matters and thus complete my understanding of exactly what universal matter and universal form.
MASTER Hold back for a moment until I can test how well you understand primary matter. Please summarize briefly what has been brought out.

DISCIPLE [F 4.16] Since all existing things are diversified in form and all structurally diversified things must coincide in their matter, it follows that the matter of existing things is one.

MASTER You have rightly understood the teaching on primary universal matter. Hear now, therefore, the teaching on primary universal form. You should envision universal form in the same way as universal matter, because the pathway to their understanding is the same.

DISCIPLE How is that?

MASTER You must realize that universal form perfects the true being of universal matter; and this being so, the true being of each must exist because of the other.

DISCIPLE If matter is matter in and of itself, I wonder whether form is form in and of itself?

MASTER [F 4.17a] How can that be the case, when the true being of matter does not even exist when divested of form, nor does the true being of form exist apart from matter for a twinkling of an eye? This provides forcible proof that the true being of each has existence only because of the other.

DISCIPLE That is so. But can you bring forward yet another explanation?

MASTER And certainly since matter does not acquire the concept or name of existing except from form, you will indeed realize from that fact that the existence of either one is owing to the other,

DISCIPLE In what way?

MASTER Since it is obvious that matter has no existence except through form, it also becomes self-evident that matter cannot exist apart from form.

DISCIPLE Assuming that matter cannot exist apart from form, what is to prevent form from existing even if matter does not?
MASTER  If form arises only through the existence of structured matter, then form cannot exist without matter, since existence is made perfect only through their combination.

DISCIPLE  Well, if it is form that gives existence to matter, why cannot form have existence on its own?

MASTER  If you concede existence to form so that it has its own nature, do you mean that the concept of form is (the same as) the concept of existence, or is it something different?

DISCIPLE  I believe that the concept of existence is the concept of form.

MASTER  How can one of them be the same as the other when the other is a property of the one?

DISCIPLE  It could be that the true being of matter is one, although its property is unity.

MASTER  Are you unaware that unity is the form of matter and differs from it? And form is unity.

DISCIPLE  What is the proof of that?

MASTER  The proof lies in the matter delimited by it, and a property must differ from what it delimits.

DISCIPLE  How can the nature of unity differ from matter when matter is itself one?

MASTER  This shows that form exists because of the true being of matter, since unity is the form of the true being of matter, and matter is the matter for the true being of unity.

DISCIPLE  From what you have just said, it seems that the form of matter is a unity that imparts existence to matter.

MASTER  That is so.
11 The oneness of form and twoness of matter

Form displays the properties of unity, while matter displays those of duality; thus the foundation of all must lie in the triad.

DISCIPLE Please explain, then, how all forms can be a unity.

MASTER Form is either one, or many.

DISCIPLE That is true. But what will you reply to some one who says that the concept of unity is separate from that of form?

MASTER If unity is different from form, it will be matter for it, or form. But unity cannot be matter for form because it is itself a property of matter. Similarly, unity cannot be form for form, because then form would be its matter and form would have form on into infinity.

DISCIPLE I now understand it in this way. But please show me in some other way, openly and clearly, that form is unity.

MASTER [F 4.17b] Examine the properties of unity, for you will find them attached to form: unity causes multiplicity, preserves it, endows it with existence, includes it, exists in every part of it, is sustained in that which is its subject, and is more worthy than its subject.

In parallel, these properties are present in form, for form constitutes the true being of that in which it resides, acquires existence from it, preserves it, includes it, exists in every part of it, is sustained in the matter that is its subject, and is superior to that, while the matter is its inferior. Now that you have learned these properties, set each of them as a middle term between form and unity, and the necessary proof will be accomplished for demonstrating that form is unity.

DISCIPLE How valuable all this is, that I gained! And I suppose it is for this reason that number is said to be the source of things, since unity is the source of number; indeed, if unity were put in place of number, that would be closer to the truth.
MASTER  [F 4.18] It was not correct to state that unity was the root principle of the universe, since unity is form only and the universe is not form only but instead is form and matter. Rather, it would have been better to state that the source of all is a triad, with a one in the place of form and a two in the place of matter.

DISCIPLE Please show me in what way the one is like form and the two like matter.

MASTER I have already demonstrated to you that the properties of unity are appropriate to form; but I shall now show you that the properties of duality belong to matter.

(1) I point out, then, that the two is placed under the one and the one above it. Similarly matter is subject to form, and form is its superior.

(2) In addition, form is one, while two is a divisible plurality; similarly, matter is multipliable and divisible. This is why matter is the cause of the multiplicity and divisibility of things, since it resembles duality.

(3) Moreover, form has one property, which is to establish existence, while matter has two. One of them is to sustain form. This corresponds to the property of form, since all things are constituted by matter’s sustainment of form and form’s completion of the true being of matter, thus accomplishing its inherent character. This property belongs to matter by reason of the primary one as distinguished from the one of form or the first one, which is the moiety of the two that we likened to matter.

Now, the second property of matter is multiplicability and divisibility, for form is divided and multiplied because of matter. Matter has this property from the second one or the moiety of the two, that is proximate to the primary one. From its proximity to that the two arises, and because of the nature of the two multiplicity and division arise.

Also, matter in primary division separates into two parts in conformity with the nature of the two; that is to say into the matter of the elemental substances and into that of the compound ones.
Thus the property of the two is applicable here also. And so you have now been shown that form assimilates to the one and matter to the two.

This being so, and matter and form being the root principles of all things: it is therefore evident that the foundation of everything lies in the three.

12 The form of Reason

Reason is self-activated; its act is harmonious with its form; and its form is one, in which totality is brought into a unity that encompasses all.

DISCIPLE It is now fully evident to me in the light of the properties of the one and the two that the one represents form and the two matter. Is there still some other way for this to be demonstrated?

MASTER In addition you will also be shown that oneness is a form in accord with the scrutiny of the form of reason, which encompasses all forms. The argumentation for this will be made as follows:

Any self-activated agent accomplishes its work by means of its form. But reason is a self-activated agent. Therefore it acts by means of its form.

Next I shall propose: reason acts by means of its form. Now the act of whatever accomplishes by means of its form is harmonious with its form.

Then I shall state: the act of reason is harmonious with its form. And the act of reason is the apprehension of oneness, which is the existence of anything. Therefore the form of reason is harmonious with the one. And that in which any two harmonious entities concur exists in each one of them. Therefore unity exists in the form of reason and so the form of reason is one.

But since it is one, it is either intrinsically so, or by accident. If by accident, it can be separated. But it does not separate from the one, and thus form is intrinsically a unity. Now, whatever exists in another intrinsically is one with that other. Therefore the form of reason is at one with unity. Consequently the form of reason is unity.
You should, however, realize that since unity is the form of reason, this is ground for asserting that all forms are brought together within it. This is why it can apprehend them all, since totality is brought into unity within its form, which is universal unity that encompasses each and every unity.

Now since all form is one and its true being is a unity that encompasses each and every one, this establishes that all forms have existence in the form of reason.

13 Universal form

The numerical sequence of reality from reason to rational soul to soul to nature falls under universal form, which is an impress from the veritable One.

DISCIPLE It is clear to me from your explanation that unity is the form of reason. And it seems right that the substances lined up under reason are placed in a sequence based on number, since they fall under the one.

MASTER How well you have understood! Now in accordance with this I shall make a kind of summary for you that will inform you about what is to follow.

[F 4.19] My teaching is that the form of reason resembles that of the one, since it accomplishes a single purpose. The form of the rational soul resembles the two because it moves from premise to conclusion, from identity to otherness. The form of the soul resembles the three, since it perceives body of three dimensions by three media: color, shape and motion; and the form of nature resembles the four because nature has four potencies (III,47).

All in all, when you reflect on existing things in their totality you find them ordered and constituted in accordance with the quality of number, and they all fall under the form of reason, which is unity, since all number falls under the one. This is why the form and true being of reason encompasses and includes all things.
DISCIPLE    From all that you have said, I am now quite convinced that unity is form. But what conclusion is to be drawn from this?

MASTER    [F 4.20] The conclusion is that universal form is an impress from the veritable One, the Most High, permeating the whole of matter and encompassing it, inasmuch as the primary Unity is the true Unity, self-activated; and thus there must be a sequent unity. Here is the inception of numerative number. This is universal form, which constitutes the true being of the totality of species, or the overall species that gives to each species its own intrinsic nature, All species concur in this concept, because all species of substances, whether elemental or compound, cannot fail to have a form that establishes their character. The concept that establishes all things is universal form, or the unity that is sequent to the creative Unity.

For this reason form is said to maintain matter and bring it to completion (IV,11), since form is unity and it is unity that constitutes and preserves all things, bringing together and unifying the true being in which it exists and preserving it against scattering and fragmentation. This is why unity is said to be general to all things and to exist within each and every reality.

DISCIPLE    How can it be said of the form that constitutes matter that it derives from the impress of the creative Unity?

MASTER    In accordance with the fact that form has been created, since it exists and existence is not an impress because an impress requires a sustainer and so cannot precede substance; and not being an impress, it is a creation. When existence is the result of creation and is an attribute of form, form obviously has been created.
14  UNITY OF FORM AND MULTIPLICITY OF MATTER

Form permeates the whole of matter and difference must be attributed to the matter in the manner of the differences apparent in light consequent on the matters it passes through.

DISCIPLE  What I have understood so far is that form is a unity impressed by the primary Unity. And so let us return to an earlier stage, that of ordering and unifying the manifold forms as we did the matters (IV,7) until what you taught has been confirmed, namely that all forms come together in a single form, which is the primary one.

MASTER  It has already been made clear earlier that the existence of matter and of form is attributable by each to the other (IV,10).

DISCIPLE  That was certainly made clear.

MASTER  Inasmuch as there had to be a universal matter, there had to be also a universal form, since matter is not merely non-form, nor form nothing but non-matter.

DISCIPLE  Please explain further.

MASTER  Can any portion of universal matter be found that is without form?

DISCIPLE  How can that possibly be found, when matter is declared to have existence only because of form? Nevertheless I suppose that if the form is somehow destroyed, the matter still remains because it was already in existence free of form.

MASTER  Did any matter remain behind free of form after losing one of its forms?

DISCIPLE  No, it didn’t.

MASTER  Therefore it is not likely in view of this that the matter had existence apart from the form, nor that any portion of it did so.

DISCIPLE  That should certainly not be asserted.

MASTER  [F 21] Be assured, then, that the totality of form is distributed throughout the total being of matter, permeating all portions of it, just as light permeates the total being of the atmosphere and color the total being of a mass and quantity the total being of substance.
DISCIPLE I agree that form spreads through and permeates the whole of matter; but I disagree that one form alone can be universal.

MASTER What leads you to disagree?

DISCIPLE Well, I observe that the forms of sensate bodies differ from those of rational ones, and similarly I note that the forms of rational substances differ among themselves. Moreover, I see that some form inheres in matter inseparably, yet I see others being separated from it. How am I to agree that all these forms are one, when they are different and separated from each other?

MASTER It must seem to you that since the forms are diverse they cannot be a unity. But all of them share in the concept of form, and the diversity and division that happens to them is not because of form itself but because of their sustaining matter. I will explain: since there is a primary Unity that is absolute, indivisible and self-actuating, there must exist a sequent unity that is hylic and divisible. This is universal form and is sustained in universal matter.

Now this secondary unity must consequently be multipliable and divisible because of the matter that sustains it, although in itself it is a unity. And it must have been hylic since it ranks next to the primary Unity, having been created by It. And since this unity or universal form was hylic, it was divisible because of the matter that sustained it and not because of its own inherent quality.

To make this clear, take form as pure and perfect light that by division and multiplication is weakened and as it is diffused becomes turbid and dim. In a general way its mid course becomes modified from its beginning and its final span from its mid course, and yet nothing is present here except the matter and the light that permeates it, which is the form. It is evident, therefore, that the weakness, turbidity, dimness and general obscurity that affects the light when it shines into matter is because of the matter, not because of the light itself.
Now this is how it happens that one substance is more perfect or more sagacious than another. It is because of the denseness and turbidity of the matter, not because of the form in itself. Knowledge and understanding depend on form, not on matter, because form is pure luminosity while matter is the contrary (III, 35), and the more rarefied and superior a matter may be because of the outpouring of brightness into it, the more sagacious and perfect it will become, like reason and the soul; while contrariwise the more matter descends (the more) dense it becomes because of distance from the brightness outpoured into it and because of its manifold parts.

As an example of this consider the atmosphere. The farther removed it is from sight, (the more) this is prevented from penetrating it, and it fails to grasp the farther visible forms because of the density and multi-partedness of the atmosphere, which seems condensed and corporified, becoming an obstruction between sight and its object; while on the other hand, the closer it may be to sight, (the better) this faculty can penetrate and break through.

Very similar is the luminosity diffused through hyle, because the greater the depth of the hyle, the denser and more substantial it becomes, and its intervening parts prevent its final ones from being fully penetrated by the brightness. The same is true of all parts of matter, since not so much illumination can penetrate any second part as the first, nor any third as the intermediate one, and the same with all the other parts until the lowest of all is reached, because the intervening parts inhibit the light from passing through others and it then becomes weaker because of matter, not because of itself.

Now, the fact of this is that as anything continues in its natural state it preserves more definitely and evidently its own form, until it mingles with something else that affects it and modifies it, transforming it away from its original purity and clarity. The same is to be said of the light that shines into the matter, since the cleaner, clearer and freer from matter it is, the stronger and more perfect. In addition, the more it mingles with the clearest parts of matter, the better it will preserve its outward form and thus be stronger and truer than what is mingled with the denser portion.
Here is further demonstration that the transformation in the luminosity disseminated through matter is caused by the matter, not by the luminosity itself. It is like sunlight enveloping something dark, or a sheer white veil covering a black object, since the whiteness will be inconspicuous next to the predominant blackness; or like light that traverses three glass panes and the second receives less light than the first and the third less than the second. It is obvious that this takes place not because the light is weakened but rather because the panes diminish the passage of light, being masses with density.

Now according to this the loss or dispersal of the luminosity of substances is not due to the radiance itself but rather to the matter, which is corporeal in contrast to the form as has already been explained (p.218). Since this is so, it stands to reason that the light itself is homogeneous, with its inferior range exactly like the superior in its true being, but it becomes obfuscated exactly as does light passing through several panes, and as does sunlight descending through murky air, since light in such an atmosphere becomes modified and no longer displays the same power and perfection that it would if the air were clear.

15 The inclusiveness of form

Diversity of form does not preclude their being a unity since apparent variety derives from their sustaining matter, and the higher and brighter any substance is, the more comprehensive its form, until finally primary universal matter sustains the form of the universe.

DISCIPLE How is it possible for matter to affect form in this way, to change and diversify it, when it is itself uniform in its own true being?

MASTER The farther removed any radiance is from its source, the dimmer and darker it will be. This occurs because it has its beginning in the (supreme) Being and Power, having been created by the high and holy primary Creator; for anything that has a beginning indubitably has an end, and as is candidly recognized, the end of anything is not like its beginning. This is why a given radiance, to the extent it may be farther removed from its source, which is powerful, and be closer to its terminus, which is weaker, will lose strength until it reaches the ultimate end and there will cease.
DISCIPLE You seem to be contradicting your own earlier statement that the radiance is not transformed because of its own nature but because of matter; and now you are saying that the closer the radiance is to its source, the stronger and more perfect, while the farther it is from its source, the weaker and less perfect.

MASTER If you had paid close attention to the truth of both explanations, you would not find them contradictory, since the first one reveals the transformation of the light in comparison with the matter when the two are joined, and the second reveals an alteration in the light itself apart from any contact with matter.

DISCIPLE Since form is multiplied and diversified because of the multiplicity of matters, how can one single hyle have a variety of forms such as the four elements?

MASTER These diversified forms are of two sorts: one, because of the diversified place that hyle itself occupies, as for instance the variety of kinds of elemental hyle; and two, because of the weakness and dullness of light when invested with matter and mingled with it.

All these considerations, therefore, have served to verify for you that diversity of forms does not prevent them from being a unity in themselves, since their variety does not derive from themselves but rather from their sustaining matter. How, then, can you after this deny or question the unity of form when you are witness to their diversity and separateness, having already granted that diversity of matters does not prevent concurrence in the notion of materiality nor participation by all of them in one matter only?

DISCIPLE I did not mean to deny that all matters can be taken back to one only, because all are forms of primary elemental matter, which is the matter for them all. But I cannot say the same of the different forms, because such forms cannot be taken back to one form only.
MASTER   You have stirred me to laughter by such a statement! Do you not remember the earlier proofs that [F 4.23] all lower forms exist in higher ones, and that the higher and brighter a substance is, the more inclusive and comprehensive of form its own form will be? Precisely as substance, being rarefied, sustained quantity and whatever shape and color it carried: and as the soul, more rarefied than substance, receives the forms of perceptible things and sustains them because of the rarity of its nature and of the sensible forms; and as the rational soul sustains a substance and whatever forms it carries; and as reason itself sustains all forms that are below it; and finally, as primary universal matter perfectly sustains the form of the whole. (III, 23 (45); III, 26; IV, 4; V, 16)

Do you understand, you who pursue philosophy so avidly, that by the foregoing proofs I have certainly shown that all forms are reduced to a single form, and the same with the matters? Consider whether this is sufficient for you or not.

DISCIPLE   It is sufficient, and I am very pleased and glad.

MASTER   And it has been made clear to you, has it not, that the lower originates in the higher, and that physical spheres are derived from spiritual ones?

16 The lower world, reflection of the higher

*The compound physical universe is a reflection of the elemental spiritual universe, and the universal sensible forms originate in forms of universal elemental substances. All lower forms truly exist in higher ones, but in a more ethereal being.*

MASTER   I shall now add a further explanation of this for you. It is this: [F 4.24] the compound physical universe is a reflection of the elemental spiritual universe, and that which is lower in the elemental worlds is a reflection of that which is higher, until the true elemental world is reached. As an example take some physical shape observed by a wakeful person, for these physical shapes are a reflection of shapes in the soul that are perceived in sleep; and similarly the sensible shapes apprehended in sleep are a reflection of inner rational ones.
DISCIPLE      How well you have exemplified the spiritual and the physical spheres!

MASTER      [F 4.25]  And so lower forms must derive from higher ones; thus the
form of physical substances will be found in the form of nature, that of nature in the form
of the soul and that in turn in the form of reason.

DISCIPLE      I find this idea hard to grasp. Will you please explain it to me more fully?

MASTER      [F 4.26] Verification that sensible forms exist in rational ones is found
in the display of variegated colors and shapes in animals, plants and gems by the impress of
the soul and nature on them; and similarly the manifestation of designs, colors and shapes,
and in general the display of all artificial shapes from the rational soul.

DISCIPLE      Possibly these forms are found in compound substances as a result of
a combination of elements in a certain proportion and not by an impress from elemental
substances.

MASTER      If these representations, colors and shapes had been created out of the
elements, they would always exist in a single manner in what is composed of them and
would not outramify in representations, colors and shapes as they do in receiving the
imprints of the (elemental) substances.

DISCIPLE      In your view, if particular sensible forms and shapes derive from particular
elemental substances, must then the forms of universal sensible forms originate in forms of
universal elemental substances?

MASTER      It cannot be otherwise, because the part signifies the whole. And certainly,
acquiescence that physical spheres derive from spiritual ones compels assent to this.

DISCIPLE      What is your teaching on lower physical form? Does it have an existence
in higher spiritual form in its own natural condition, or in some other way?

MASTER      [F 4.27] All lower forms truly do exist in higher ones in a more
elemental, more ethereal existence that can be observed in the being of bodies and their
forms as these are anchored in imagination, which is one of the potencies of the soul,
although they may not be evident to sense; beyond this, however, is the existence of all
forms as these are anchored in reason.
17  **Similarity of activity between lower and higher**

Each rational form derives from a higher one of similar activity, and since the activities are alike, the forms must be alike.

DISCIPLE  You have now determined for me that sense forms derive from rational ones. But please also confirm that all rational substances originate in each other.

MASTER  We have already concluded from earlier proofs that the forms of sensible substances stem from those of rational substances, and that the forms of rational substances proceed from each other (III,17; IV,16). Keep these in mind. I shall also now repeat what I then said: the proof that each rational form issues from a higher one lies in the similarity of their activities; and since their activities are alike, as you must realize from the foregoing, and these activities have been carried out by the forms of the substances in question, it has also been evident that these forms are alike, which confirms that they are derived from each other.

DISCIPLE  I wish that at this point you would identify each of the forms of rational substances and show me where they are similar.

MASTER  [F 4.28] The form of reason comprehends and recognizes all forms; the form of the rational soul comprehends and recognizes them as it moves and passes among them, which is like the activity of reason; the form of the sensing soul comprehends and recognizes physical forms by moving entire objects spatially (III,48, p. 169), which resembles the activity of the rational soul; the form of the vegetal soul comprehends the matters of objects and moves their parts in space, which resembles the activity of the sensing soul; and the form of nature brings about the unification, attraction, expulsion and mutation of parts (III,47, p.167), which is like the activity of the vegetal soul. Or do you fail to see that since these activities are alike, the forms that implement them must also be alike?
18  The gradations of form

*Universal form permeates all forms but with differing grades depending on distance from source.*

DISCIPLE That’s the way it must be.

MASTER [F 4.29] Inasmuch as these forms are all alike, must they not originate in each other as we have said (IV,17), and the strongest and most perfect among them must be the cause for the weak and imperfect?

DISCIPLE Indeed they must.

MASTER Since the forms of both elemental and compound substances permeate their matters and envelop whatever is in them even though they originate in each other, the lower in the higher successively from highest to lowest, why can you not accept that (universal) form permeates all forms, just as sunlight permeates the atmosphere and extends from highest to lowest in unbroken continuity? And it has saturated and enveloped universal matter, leaving no part of it and no place in it devoid or denuded of it, but rather (all are) clothed in it.

But this form-quasi-light shows differing gradations in matter. At the highest extreme the light was pure and its supporting substance spiritual and ethereal, while at the lowest it was dull, clouded and turbid and its supporting substance corporeal and dense. Between these two extremes were (intermediate gradations) varying with the changing light and density of matter in proportion to distance and proximity.

And so as you reflect on form in this way, you will observe that at the beginning it is spiritual and perfect but gradually becomes more dense until it reaches the lowest extreme. At that point you will see motion die down and form come to rest.
DISCIPLE Truly I have witnessed this, exactly as you said. But what is the cause of the diversification that occurred in the form?

MASTER It came from the form’s distance from its source, as we have seen (IV,15).

DISCIPLE Please tell me again now what that was.

19 Will as intermediary

Will stands intermediate between the supreme Existent and form. It is illimitable in nature but limited in its act, which is the creation of form.

MASTER [F 4.30] In an earlier discussion I have already acquainted you with the fact that since the primary form is the secondary unity that is responsive to the primary creative Unity, and the primary Unity was not self-acting as was the numerical unity: for this reason the unity that is responsive to it must be as it would be if it were the numerical unity, or capable of being multiplied and divided (IV,13). Hence the number of forms is multiplied by reason of its multiplication and diversified by virtue of its diversification. What causes this is that (the secondary unity) becomes enveloped in matter and distanced from the Source of unity.

DISCIPLE This was what puzzled me in the first place -- how a radiance that originates in will can differ from another that is closer to its source, and how something can be closer than something else whose true being and potency are without bounds and not subject to space nor accompaniment. How can there be any intermediary between it and anything else when it has no boundary, no beginning, no end, and is purely and simply itself?

MASTER What puzzled you about this idea was that you postulated a limitless will. Now although will is limitless when considered solely in terms of its true being apart from its act, nevertheless it should not be regarded illimitable with reference to the form that originates in it. This means that its act is limited at the point of its beginning, and since form begins with it, will itself must be limited at the point of inception of its activity, at the beginning of the form that has sprung from it.
Therefore will must occupy an intermediate position between the supreme Existent and the form that has sprung from will. But if we consider will apart from its activity, then it will be neither intermediary nor limited, but in fact will be identical with the primary Existent (V,37, end).

Inasmuch, then, as will is limited with respect to its activity, we are not far from a true perception in assuming that one of its rays may be nearer to it than another, because that radiant light has its beginning in and arises from it, and that beginning is closer to it than anything else. Consequently what is closest to the beginning will be most like it, and the converse. In conformity with this idea you will readily understand the intermediaries that lie between will and the nearer and farther luminosities.

You must be careful, however, not to view propinquity and contiguity as physical, since that would lead you into error. Rather you should hold in mind the thought of the proximity of this luminosity to will in the sense of being related to it without intermediary. The same may be said of the relation of the different grades of radiance to each other.

**20 The primacy of will**

All form including the form of reason has a beginning and is modified by its contact with matter. Above it is the form of will, the repository of all form and the true efficient cause. Thus in summary lower forms derive from higher ones and all coincide in the universal form that embraces them.

DISCIPLE I now understand from your explanation how the radiance can be either near to or far from its source. But please show me now how it is that form can be remote from its source.

MASTER Since form has a beginning, it must have an end and so must have a succession of grades between the two extremes, given their range of difference as to perfection and imperfection.
DISCIPLE What proof is there that form has a beginning?

MASTER The limitation of form is discovered through sense, for form is limited in that it is the boundary of body. The same is true of reason, since the form of reason is the first and foremost one and the beginning of all form; but it has its boundary in that it has received existence from its Creator and is joined with matter. The lack of luminosity in the final substance and indeed its total absence reveals that it has a beginning. This confirms that it has been created, and that form is bounded and limited.

DISCIPLE If form has a beginning, what prevents its end from being identical with its beginning?

MASTER If its end were identical with its beginning, they would be uniform and without individuation. But that is impossible because of forms compounding with its supporting matter.

DISCIPLE In what way?

MASTER Are you not aware that form is changed by its contact with matter and becomes something different in combination with matter than what it was when above it? Although form was not even entitled to this designation except when it became the form of matter. And so what happens to it when it joins matter ought to happen also in the course of its association.

DISCIPLE Is there any form above matter?

MASTER Can you doubt that [F 4.31] the radiance permeating matter outflows from another effulgence that overtops matter, which is the splendor that resides in the true being of the creative Power? I refer to will, which brought forth form from potentiality to actuality; although all form exists actually in will relative to the Creator, but is said to exist potentially relative to the creation.
Now if you take into account the potency of Will and how many forms it holds within its own true being, you will realize that this (number) that universal matter acquired from it, and all the forms sustained in it, however great, numerous and brilliant they may be, when compared to what Will retains within itself may be compared to what the atmosphere obtains from sunlight since the light acquired and diffused throughout the atmosphere when compared to the radiant light that exists within the sun is totally insignificant. Such is the comparison of material form with that of (the divine) will.

**DISCIPLE** Why was the secondary luminary identified as form and not the primary one (i.e. Will)?

**MASTER** Because the secondary one is sustained in matter and hence is form for it, while the primary luminary is unsustained and so is not form for anything.

**DISCIPLE** Well, then, according to that, form must be twofold, one form being above matter and the other being joined to it.

**MASTER** On the contrary, [F 4.32] form must be triple. One is the form that exists within the true being of will. This may be termed a form only as a suggestion or designation, not being one in truth since it is not sustained in anything; instead, since its true being is other than that of a form sustained in matter it ought to be admitted on a different basis and represented by (some other) appellation, because the form of reason, which exists in the true being of will, cannot be the same both before and after its emergence from this and union with matter.

The second is the form that actually joins with matter, and is the form of universal reason. The third on the other hand is surmised to exist apart from matter yet joined with it potentially. All the others are included under universal form. In view of this, do not reject Plato’s division of form into three types: (1) the form that exists potentially but not yet in matter; (2) the form that exists in fact and is joined with matter; and (3) the form of the elements, or the four primary qualities.
DISCIPLE  How can universal form be said to exist within the true being of will?

MASTER    [F 4.33] If Will is the creative cause, then the form of all things lies within it inherently, because the form of every effect lies within its cause. But the effect lies within its cause according to the form that it possesses. Within the true being of will things do not exist identically; rather the existence of things there depends on the extent to which they have been caused by it.

DISCIPLE  From all the preceding clarifications it is self-evident that lower forms derive from higher ones, and also that all forms, however numerous and varied, are nevertheless comprised in the universal form that encompasses them.

MASTER    This will become even clearer to you when we address ourselves in the fifth book, which follows this one, to universal matter and universal form in themselves with the assistance of God and by His grace.
1 Reason’s scope of perception

How can the mind grasp what it is itself made of? Reason is diffused throughout matter and form, perceiving them. Knowing its own true being as matter and form, it knows them also. It knows that its form requires support and that something above it supports it and constitutes its substance.

DISCIPLE It has now been made evident to me from the premises of the inquiries in the four preceding treatises that in all existents both sensible and rational nothing is present but universal matter and universal form. [Falaquera 5.1] Let us, then, in this fifth treatise focus on each one individually. Please free them one from the other and instruct me in the knowledge of the true being of each, both what should be understood with regard to them and what investigated further, with view to making this introduction to philosophy a stepping stone for me to its second and third parts (I,7), or the understanding of will and of the primary Existent.

MASTER If universal matter and form are the highest degree of all created things and are the ultimate of all substances in elemental and spiritual quality, you ought in consequence to refine your mind, unify your nature and purify your imagination as far as you are able, freeing it from physical contingencies and transcending sense and sense objects in order to realize that the power of your reason comprehends all things. Thereupon you will achieve a true understanding of one and the other, of universal matter and of universal form. Ask now, therefore, whatever you wish about the knowledge of universal matter and universal form.
DISCIPLE You should first call in question how my reason can possibly apprehend either one, whether universal matter or universal form, since it is itself composed of them and subordinate to them.

MASTER Reason has the property of apprehending universal matter and form since reason’s substance is elemental to the ultimate of simplicity and spirituality, because of which it can permeate and unite with everything. In consequence when it permeates and unites with universal matter and form, it perceives each of them. Moreover, since universal matter and form are the true substance of reason, it may be stated that reason is acquainted with that substance. Hence it is undeniable that reason is acquainted with universal matter and form, since it knows its own true substance, which is composed of them.

DISCIPLE This is what I was previously at a loss about – how reason could perceive universal matter and form, though it is made up of them. It is not surprising that reason beholds what lies below it, but unexpected that it can apprehend what stands above.

MASTER You need not deem it impossible for reason to perceive perfectly those things that are above it, since reason is aware of what stands above it, inasmuch as it is established in that and exists because of it, seeing that reason knows its own true being and knows through this that something is required to sustain its form; and so it knows that something exists above it that sustains it and by virtue of which it is constituted and exists.

This is why we shall say that the form of reason knows matter through existing because of it and being constituted from it; and in general reason perceives universal matter and form whenever it marks the difference between one and the other within its own nature and in contrast to the form of reason. Now, the difference between them in terms of true being is therefore that the nature of matter is inherently discrete from that of form, while its difference in contrast to the form of reason lies in the fact that the form of reason knows itself, and knowing itself knows that it is form; and knowing itself to be form knows that it is borne in matter and that its sustaining matter is its substance.
2 The basis of differentiation between matter and form

The primary distinction between matter and form is that the former supports and the latter is supported. This is possible only when each is considered as compounded, not isolated. Reason knows itself and knows that it is sustained in a discrete matter.

DISCIPLE Please explain to me the distinction between matter and form, wherein it consists, and why.

MASTER Matter differs from form in that one of them sustains and the other is sustained.

DISCIPLE If matter differs from form in that it sustains and form differs from matter in that it is understood to be sustained, then each of them is a compound of its own true being and of that by which indeed it is understood to differ from the other.

MASTER Since matter does not sustain itself nor is form sustained by itself, but instead matter sustains relative to the form sustained in it, and form similarly is sustained relative to its supporting matter: you will realize by this that matter and form are differentiated by this characteristic only when considered to participate in a compound, and not when the true being of one or the other of them is being appraised alone.

DISCIPLE In what way does matter differ from form in terms of the true being of each?

MASTER Each differs from the other intrinsically. I do not mean here a difference of conformities but rather of opposition and definite contrariety, having no superior principle in which to share.

DISCIPLE How is it known that matter differs intrinsically?

MASTER By their differentiation through the reasoning process, and because one sustains while the other is sustained.
DISCIPLE  How are matter and form differentiated through the reasoning process?

MASTER  [F 5.2] Because reason’s knowing takes place by the contact of its form with that of the thing known and their unification. And when the form of reason becomes united with that form, it spontaneously knows that a matter is requisite to its form for its sustainment, and that the form is something different from the matter.

Now to make this teaching clearer and more evident, let us take as an example the substance of reason. Since you are now persuaded that the substance of reason is discrete from its form, this will convince you that the matters of elemental as well as of compound substances are discrete from their forms, and you will understand in consequence that universal matter (too) is separate from its form.

I shall therefore propose that reason knows intrinsically that it possesses a form because the form of reason knows itself and hence is aware of other forms outside itself. Now inasmuch as the form of reason is conscious of itself and is supported in a matter that is other than itself, consequently as you have already learned it has a sustaining matter; and along with this you have learned of its difference from the matter in which it is sustained, since it knows itself and knows that its own true being is separate from the matter that that sustains it. Furthermore, considering that reason has self-knowledge, it must in consequence have knowledge of matter and of matter’s difference from itself.

3 The separateness of matter and form

The difference between matter and form is like that between mass and color, or between body and soul, or between soul and reason, or between spiritual substances and the accidents supported in them.

DISCIPLE  How can I picture to myself the separateness of matter and form, since they exist in total oneness and irreducibility?
You have to imagine the difference between matter and form as you do the difference between mass and color. Take mass as an example of matter and color as an example of form. Similarly take sense as distinguishing between color and mass and perceiving the form of color by itself as an example of reason distinguishing between matter and form and perceiving the form by itself. This will also make it easier for you to imagine the difference between the body and the soul and the reason since they are none the less united; and in general the difference between spiritual substances even though united; and similarly the difference between spiritual substances and the accidents they sustain.

Whenever you imagine this and use it as an example in your mind, it will help you to picture the difference between matter and form; for this separateness truly resembles that of body and soul as well as that of reason and soul, since the relation of form to matter is identical with that of soul to body and of reason to soul.

4 Matter alone and form alone

Universal matter may be visualized as occupying the ultimate extreme of existing things and as their sustainer, while universal form confines all things within a universal comprisement and endows them with existence. Viewed in itself the true being of matter is a spiritual potency, while that of form is a creative illumination that bestows species and form. Neither matter nor form can be viewed in itself since matter lacks form and form is far more elemental than the soul which lies between the two extremes and includes the faculty of imagination.

The discreteness of matter and form in spiritual substances is suggested by the discreteness of the matter of reason and its form, and of each elemental substance. An understanding of reason leads to an understanding of everything. The nature of reason is to determine the species and forms of things. The universe lies within the true being of reason.
DISCIPLE The separateness of matter and form in individual elemental substances is now confirmed and clear to me. But in what way am I to represent matter alone and form alone?

MASTER Picture universal matter in itself as if it were something situated at the final limit of existing things at the farthest extreme of all substances and as the place of all things or in the concept of sustainer. In the same way imagine universal form in itself as embracing all things in a universal comprisement and constituting all the true beings that it embraces. That is what reason perceives with respect to any entity when it beholds what it is or what species it belongs to in the concept of something sustained.

DISCIPLE I did not seek from you a representation of matter with respect to form nor of form with respect to matter; rather I asked for some idea of the true being of each one by itself without the other.

MASTER [F 5.3] Imagine, then, that the true being of matter taken by itself is a spiritual potency having no form; and imagine that the true being of form is a revealing illumination that endows whatever it invades with the property and concept of visibility and form. And in general the representation of the existence of matter and form ought to be like that of all rationals, that is, the reason-known existences, not the sense-known ones that possess hyle.

If therefore you are striving to picture matter apart from form you will not be successful, because matter in and of itself is without form, and since it occupies the highest extreme, while the soul is in fact intermediate between the two extremes. Similarly, if you try to imagine form in and of itself you will not readily achieve this because the faculty of imagination is one of the potencies of the soul, and the substance of form is far more elemental than that of the soul.

DISCIPLE What, then, am I to do about this?
In order to understand the dissimilarity of matter and form in each of the rational substances and the overall separateness of universal matter and universal form, take reason as an example, and by the difference between the matter and form of reason form a judgment of the difference between the matter and form of each of the elemental substances, and in general of the difference between universal matter and universal form.

This is why I teach that whoever wishes to understand foundational principles and the whole scope of existence ought to explore the substance of reason assiduously and set this before himself in every inquiry, because the understanding of this leads to the understanding of the universe. Clear thinking demands this, since the true being of reason particularizes all and is the form of all. Everything must therefore reside within the true being of reason; and since this is the case, it follows that whoever understands the nature of reason must also understand the universe.

How reason can know matter and form

How is this to be done? Identify the form of reason that is peculiarly its own, the substantial differentia that endows it with existence, and become cognizant that it is by this form that reason differs from anything else. Then you must discover the matter supporting that form and touch it with the form of your reason, perceiving it exactly as sense perceives a sense object. Reason is able to know the nature of matter and form independently of each other. Form is more worthy of the concept of existence than is matter. It knows that it is supported and that it is independent of what supports it.

Please show me how to understand the difference between universal matter and universal form in the light of the form of reason.

Proper deliberation on the discreteness of universal matter and universal form in the light of the form of reason requires that you for yourself discern the form of reason that is peculiarly its own, or the substantial differentia that constitutes its nature. It is by this that you will determine that it is what it is, and by this you will discover what elements of truth or error lie in one or other of the opposites.
Subsequently through that same form you will discover the difference between the substance of reason and any other. This fact will enable you to realize that reason intrinsically knows that it is possessed of form and that by such form it differs from any other. Once you have gained an accurate knowledge of the form of reason and have realized that it is by this form that it differs from any other, you will then have to find the matter that sustains it; and it will seem that you are touching the true being of matter with the form of your reason, and you will perceive it in exactly the way that sense perceives a sense object.

DISCIPLE If reason is made up of matter and form and becomes aware of an object by the union of its form with that of the object: then how in such a case can reason come to know the true being of either matter or form by itself and apart from the other if it is itself made up of both? And beyond that, since reason perceives the forms of things after matter and form have combined, how can it possibly grasp either one of them in isolation?

MASTER If the meaning of knowledge is the union of the form of reason with its object, and the form of reason joins with matter and unites with it: what follows from this is that the form of reason when united with matter knows the true being of matter because of its close contact. Similarly this form may reasonably be supposed to be aware of itself and to know that it is what it is. It will consequently know that it is the form of the matter that sustains it.

In addition, since matter received existence only through its union with form, it follows that form deserves the designation and concept of existence more than does matter. And since apprehension of this concept takes place only when reason perceives the form of an object, form must discover itself and its matter at the same time. And indeed, since the form of reason inherently knows the form of things outside itself, all the more must it know itself; and knowing itself it will know that it is the form of a thing.
DISCIPLE    The form of reason could know the forms of all things outside itself since they are itself and it is universal relative to them. But since matter is other than itself, how can it cognize matter?

MASTER     The form of reason by the fact of knowing itself does not thereby recognize matter in its difference, but rather knows that it is the form of something and that some matter sustains it.

DISCIPLE    How can it be at all possible that the form of reason should know the matter that sustains it when that matter has no form of its own such that the form of reason can unite with it to make possible its knowledge of it?

MASTER     If the form of reason knows its own true being, knows that it is itself the form of the matter that sustains it and yet other than that matter, it has then surely recognized the matter.

DISCIPLE    How can the form of reason know its own true being and know that this is other than the matter that sustains it?

MASTER     Because form knows itself it surely knows that it is a form that is sustained, and knows further thereby that it is other than the matter sustaining it. Moreover, because form knows that it shares a common boundary with matter because of its union with it, and knows that it includes something and is the form of something, it will know thereby that it is other than that something.

6     The union of illimitables

How can two limitless entities combine? Just as light and air combine, and the same applies at the level of reason. God's creation of form is similar to bringing forth an idea or sending out sense-perceptivity.

DISCIPLE    How can I picture the termination of form at matter and their union when neither one of them has any boundary or limit?
The concept of the coincidence of form and matter is like that of the coincidence of light and air or of tone or rhythm and voice, since each one of these combines with its matter although none of them has any boundary. In a general way the concept of the coincidence of form with matter is like that of the coincidence of one spiritual substance with another, or like the union of spiritual substances with spiritual accidents and with physical substances.

Take as an example of this the relation of reason to the soul and of the soul to the body as explained earlier (V,3, end). The idea of the relation of form to primary matter and its union with it will therefore resemble the idea of the relation of reason to the soul and of this to an accident sustained in it and to a body with which it is linked. What is even more subtle and recondite is the relation of reason to the object of reasoning and of sense to a sense object.

What must also be taken into consideration in accordance with this example is the supreme and holy God’s production of form in matter from nonbeing into being, which is like emitting an idea from Its own true being upon something ideated, or sending forth sense perception upon something perceived.

7 The formation and identity of the substance of reason

*The form of reason is universal, embraces all form and what sustains it is primary universal matter, since there is no other above it into which it can be resolved.*

DISCIPLE Suppose I do imagine the combination of form and matter. What truth is to be understood from their coalescence?

MASTER It is the truth of the coalescence of one reality with another until they become one.

DISCIPLE What idea is formed of matter and form once they have coalesced?

MASTER That of the substance of reason, which is made up of matter and form.
DISCIPLE What is the procedure for confirming that reason is made up of these?

MASTER Once you consider that the form of reason embraces and includes all form, you will then realize that its form is universal; and once you have recognized this, you will understand that what supports it is universal matter.

DISCIPLE You have assumed that the form of reason knows the true being of matter because it knows that it is itself limited by matter and that it is the form of something other than itself; but what if form understands itself to be form for itself alone, not for another?

MASTER If the form of reason is aware of its existence apart from others, it will then know that some other exists by which it is differentiated from other forms.

DISCIPLE But how will you reply if I suggest that the form of reason knows itself to be inherently differentiated from others without any other being responsible for its difference?

MASTER When the form of reason knows that its difference from others is exactly like the difference of other forms from it, and knows that such forms belong to something: then it will certainly know that it is itself a form that belongs to something. It will therefore recognize the matter that sustains it.

DISCIPLE I admit that. But what proof is there that it is truly primary elemental matter?

MASTER The proof is that no other can be discovered above it from which it can be differentiated and into which it can be resolved. Now whatever can be resolved into another by sense or reason is compound. But this matter cannot be resolved into anything else. You will therefore understand that this is primary matter and truly elemental.

The same is true of form. In addition, since the form of reason is universal -- which is evident in the fact that it accumulates and sustains all forms -- it follows that what sustains it is universal matter.

DISCIPLE Do you not consider that body is the form of matter and matter the form of the essential entity?
Body is not separate from the true being of matter and so cannot be its form since the true being of substance is that of matter. Their designations are separate only as a convenience of speech. Matter is therefore used with reference to form, and substance is used when it stands alone (II, 11).

8 **Existence requires matter and form together**

Matter and form are the source of difference. Existence arises through the union of matter and form, and no entity possessed of unity or form alone can exist, nor can matter be said to exist apart from form.

Whatever exists is either sense-known or reason-known. Sense and reason join only with sense forms or rational forms because these are intermediate between the form of reason and of the sensing on the one hand, and the matters of rational and sensible forms on the other. Forms consequently join with other forms that correspond to them. Reason for its perception of material things requires intermediate forms that provide similarity between its form and theirs. Existence depends on form, without which matter lacks unqualified existence. It may however have potential existence that becomes real on its acquisition of form.

**DISCIPLE** What is your view of the meaning of what is called thingness?

**MASTER** Have you forgotten the formulas and proofs we brought out in the essay on Existence that show that an existent is not a universal genus?

**DISCIPLE** I remember them well. But how would you answer some one who held that substantiality and unity subsist in existence?

**MASTER** Please make clear how you perceive this.

**DISCIPLE** Since you agree that the most general genus is primary matter, which is the first substance by numerical order, it might be said that substantiality and unity are its form. Proof of this is that by the very fact of being one it differs from any other; and difference involves form. Therefore unity is form, and it is this that is receptive of unity and substantiality; and this is the thing that properly is called one and substance.
MASTER  You must first lay down a root principle on which whatever we determine may be based: that the beginning of difference and diversity lies in matter and form. That being so, it stands to reason that every property that peculiarly marks each matter-and-form individually appertains exclusively to the true being of that one which has been marked by it. Otherwise the elemental unity would be compound.

Now inasmuch as this is the case, it is certain that the property of unity, which in terms of genus is held to be universal, is not something other than its true being but rather is indeed its own true being. And if this is true, then it is erroneous to state that this is a reality that receives the concept of unity and that from the combination of the two concepts arose the true being of a universal genus.

You must by all means understand that existence arises from the merging of matter and form, and existence as a property belongs not to matter alone but to matter and form together. This being so, there can be no reality to receive the concept of unity, or in other words form, since matter never had existence except by and through its union with form.

DISCIPLE  You have led to a rather impossible conclusion because if the property of existence does not belong to matter intrinsically, then matter is intrinsically nonexistent. Consequently it is pointless to seek the existence of something that lacks existence.

MASTER  You must realize that it is impossible for matter to have existence apart from form, because it exists only insofar as it is clothed in form, inasmuch as the existence of anything depends on form.

DISCIPLE  [F 5.12] What is the proof that the existence of anything depends on form?

MASTER  It is this: whatever exists is either sense-known or reason-known. Now sense and reason apply only to sensate and rational forms, since these stand between the forms of reason and sense and the matters of sensible and rational forms. It is because of this that forms relate only to forms, since it is these that confront them.
Again, reason and sense perceive things by their forms, and forms unite only with forms because of their similarity and participation in a single genus. This is why reason for its perception of matter things has need of intermediate forms that provide similarity between its form and theirs. Now since existence comes to anything only through form, matter without form cannot be endowed with existence in any absolute sense. But if matter is represented as having existence, let this be potentially in order that when it receives form it will pass into actuality and possess existence in very fact.

**9 Form or unity as the cause of matter**

Does not existence precede unity, since unity cannot emerge in nonbeing and existence can be separated from unity? No, for unity is form, and matter exists only because of form. Does matter itself then lack existence at all? No, we must rather view its existence as either potential or actual, and any description of the former will not be the same as the latter, which becomes true only upon union with form.

**DISCIPLE** I did not ask you about matter’s existence in potentiality, for I knew that reason cannot apprehend anything unless that object’s form joins with its own. Rather, I was inquiring about matter’s own intrinsic existence, since if existence as you said derives from form, then matter cannot possibly have existence. How indeed is it possible for matter to have existence in and of itself when this can happen only by virtue of form?

**MASTER** If you are thinking of matter apart from form, it will not be suited for having the property of existence, as it is when combined with form.

**DISCIPLE** If matter is suited for having the property of existence only when joined with form, then it does not have intrinsic existence. And since form is unity and existence is said to be one, and unity cannot exist in nonbeing, it is obvious that something exists before unity and becomes by means of it. Now the proof that existence comes before unity is that existence can be separated from unity, but unity cannot be separated from existence.
MASTER  What we are saying about unity is equally applicable to form because unity is a form and matter deserved existence because of the unity sustained within it. This is what conferred existence on it, since matter without unity had none; but in fact matter and unity had a common beginning inasmuch as matter was fit for existence because of unity, just as it was apt for the property of unity and form because of unity and form.

Now here is the proof that the existence of matter depends on form: form is the true being of anything (IV,10, end) and when form is lost, that which it formed is dissipated because the form itself was the true being of the object exactly as when the soul is withdrawn from the body the body disintegrates.

Further proof that unity is the cause of matter itself is that anything is said to be itself or to have existence by virtue of the unity that constitutes its true being. Now since unity is the cause of that self, it is ascribed to unity; and being attributed to unity, it cannot then be prior to it. So since existence is not anterior to unity, it cannot then be properly attributed to matter apart from form. That being so, it becomes evident that form is what confers existence on matter.

DISCIPLE  What ought to follow from this is that matter has no existence at all.

MASTER  What you must understand is that existence is of two sorts: potential, which is a distinguishing characteristic of each, whether matter or form by itself as we have already shown; and actual, which is a characteristic of matter and form when they are combined and united. Now, it is impossible to describe matter in itself in the same way as when joined with form. When matter is considered in itself, existence does not properly belong to it because this is a property of form and the matter is devoid of form. But when it is considered together with form, then existence does belong to it as a property of form, since it acquired the existence of form when it became united with it.
This takes place because from the combination of matter and form another nature is created consisting of both, and one that previously did not exist in one or the other as itself. Since it is not in the nature of either matter or form to appear by itself until both are joined and united, from their joining and union a significance is created that did not previously exist in either one alone. This takes place because from the union of dissimilars of any sort a form is created that was not previously present in any of them.

In the light of this explanation you will consider the manifestation and actualization of all things; that is to say, the coming-to-be of existents when universal matter and universal form are joined.

10 Matter’s potential existence and receptivity

_The philosophers have represented existence as the emergence of form in matter that has potential existence. Its real existence may be said to be within the wisdom of God, as a potency for supporting form. It comes into existence because of its receptivity to form, while form had existence potentially in matter and so could thus come into actuality._

DISCIPLE From what you say I conclude that matter is nonbeing, for since the existence of anything depends on form and there is no mean between existence and nonexistence, matter for its part must be nonexistence.

MASTER Although matter may be thought nonexistent, it nevertheless ought not to be said to lack some sort of inherent existence apart from that which it has when joined with form; in other words a potential existence. This is why matter is said to be not wholly nonexistent in fact, since it does have inherent existence potentially, and actual existence comes about when matter joins form.

It was because of this that certain philosophers represented existence as the emergence of form in matter. Again and similarly, matter is not absolute potentiality, since it has the capacity for latent existence – no doubt that same existence which it had in the wisdom of the great and supreme Eternal, not combined with form.
DISCIPLE Please explain this idea to me more fully – the existence of formless matter within the wisdom of the great and supreme Creator.

MASTER The existence of matter within the wisdom of God is like that of the idea you asked about in my mind, since although it is nonexistent to you, it is nevertheless not therefore nonexistent to me,

DISCIPLE Is there still another way to demonstrate that matter is not totally nonexistent?

MASTER There certainly is another, because total nonexistence cannot possibly go forth into existence. How indeed can it, when there has been no prior knowledge of it?

DISCIPLE What, then, is the consequence of this?

MASTER The consequence is that matter must exist potentially, since it was a potency for the purpose of sustaining form.

DISCIPLE What proof is there that matter must have potential existence?

MASTER The proof is that primary form existed in it potentially, and for that reason it came forth into actuality because of form’s union with it.

DISCIPLE Why is matter said to exist potentially and not actually?

MASTER Matter is said to exist potentially when not joined with a form that exists actually.¹⁵⁰ That is why matter existed potentially, lacking actuality. It is inherently receptive, and two contrary potencies cannot coincide in the same one.

Now, the proof that matter lacks reality is this: that it is inherently receptive. Furthermore, motion is possessed by what moves in order that it may have and be perfected by that; and whatever moves to anything lacks that thing.¹⁵¹ It follows, therefore, that inasmuch as primary matter moves, its motion will be to something else, namely form, in order to have and be perfected by that. Hence it must previously have lacked it.

¹⁵⁰ De anima 412a 10; 414a 16; Physica 192a 29.
¹⁵¹ Physics 210a 10.
DISCIPLE  In view of the fact that matter has no existence but for form, how can it be said to go forth into existence?

MASTER  There is no difficulty, since it is said to come into existence only because of its receptivity to form. Similarly form is not said to be wholly without existence in matter because it was present there potentially and for that reason came forth into actuality.

11  Matter’s inherent but latent existence

Matter appears both to lack and to possess existence, but this is merely in the sense that darkness is potentially luminous. We may say that the being received by matter from form is not material being but formal, and from the point of view of formal existence matter may be called nonexistent. But it is better to say that matter has material existence until it combines with form, just as form has formal existence until it combines with matter.

DISCIPLE  Up to this point I have learned from what we have covered that matter did not possess existence, that it lacked being, because it gains existence when it combines with form, which is actual existence and possesses being because of having it potentially. How, then, can it be possible to embody both being and nonbeing in matter at once?

MASTER  Think of the nonexistence of matter as if it were the darkness of the atmosphere, and think of the form in it as a light. Then look upon the dark atmosphere as having inherent existence and potential luminosity even though it lacks light; and in the same way consider that matter has inherent existence, and although it lacks form has that potential existence which is created out of the union of matter and form.

DISCIPLE  I am now convinced by what you have said that matter has inherent existence. But granting that, how can it be true to say that matter owes its existence to form?
MASTER  It is not material being that matter receives from form but rather formal being; for matter has only that existence which arises from the union of matter and form, but with form and because of form, even though matter does have inherent material existence.

Now if at this point you wish to regard matter as nonexistent in contrast to formal existence, I can raise no objection since existence usually means it is composed of matter and form. Again, if you consider that the existence of something composed of matter and form comes from potential being, which is the being of matter, and actual being, which is of form, then you will realize that the existence of matter by comparison is nonexistence. Therefore there is nothing to prevent calling matter nonexistent in this sense.

DISCIPLE  Well, then, since we are discussing the existence of universal matter and universal form, which is what we are now searching for, which of these modes of their being shall we consider?

MASTER  Since we are studying the existence of universal matter and universal form, our exploration provides us with knowledge of both. If we select the being that is in terms of form, we shall discover that universal matter has formal existence; and if we subsequently withdraw form from that image, we shall find that matter has material existence. We can deal with form in the same way.

12  Review of the existence of universal matter and form

Identification of the properties of universal matter and form and evidence of their presence in all existents; separation of matter and form in both sensate and rational substances for clearer understanding of them. Other ways to ascertain the existence of universal matter and form as given in IV, 6.

DISCIPLE  Let us now begin to inquire into the existence of universal matter and universal form; that is, what it is, of what sort, why it exists, and other related questions. (See also V,22)
MASTER  At the beginning of our research we set up the form of our inquiry into the existence of universal matter and universal form (I, 10), and laid down two principles. One was general, for you to consider universal matter and form in your reason with the properties that reason assigns to, them if they exist, and afterward to seek those same properties in existing things. If you find them there, then universal matter and form exist. But we have already identified the properties of universal matter and form at that point (I, 10 & 13) and have brought you to an understanding of the presence of such properties in all existents. This demonstrates, therefore, that universal matter and universal form do exist.

The second principle is particular or individual. It provides for the examination of all sensate and rational substances and the resolution of each one of them into its form by ratiocination, and then combining matter and form until at last universal matter and form are thereby joined. We have already done this as many times as we have discussed the matter, and then having considered the sense-perceptible substances we have separated their forms from their matters and subsequently recombined forms with matters. In this way universal matter and universal form have been substantiated in the sense-perceptibles.

In the same way we also separated the forms of the rational substances from their matters after confirming their existence by proofs; then we recombined their matter with their forms; and in this way confirmed (the presence of) universal matter and universal form in rational substances.

After that we combined the matter and form of the sensibles with the matter and form of the rationally, and from this resulted universal matter and universal form. In conformity with this second principle, therefore, universal matter and form must exist.

To these two principles we have now also added some other ways of establishing the presence of universal matter and form. One of these is that since the Creator of things is one, the creation must be twofold. Also, entities are not in all respects diverse, nor do they in all respects coincide.
Moreover, whatever is present in the mind may be divided into a property and that to which the property belongs. Furthermore, the ultimate that reason can grasp is genus and differentia. Again, entities can be resolved into two radicals or several or other divisions. And finally, since body is located in the lowest extreme and constituted of matter and form, it is the opposite of reason, which occupies the highest extreme; and reason is also composed of matter and form, because the lower originates in the higher. This makes patent that every existent is composed of matter and form (IV, 6).

In all these ways universal matter and form are proved to exist. Imprint on your memory, therefore, all that we have said about the existence of universal matter and form from the beginning of this discussion up until now, because this will complete your understanding of it.

13 Reason as comprehensive universal form

The existence of universal matter is more easily accepted than is that of universal form. Reason includes and perceives all forms; its form brings together and embraces the unity of every form within its own. It cannot perceive what lies outside its own true being, and so all forms must be within it in an elemental and spiritual being. This is true of individual reason and must be so of universal.

DISCIPLE All the foregoing information establishes the existence of universal matter and form. But my mind does not so readily consent to the existence of universal form as of universal matter. Therefore please explain further and confirm the existence of universal form before we undertake to examine the other points we wished to bring up in connection with universal matter and form (V, 12).

MASTER We must establish for you a doctrine of universal form that you can accept and not deviate from. Let us propose, then, that if a form actually exists that sustains the form of every kind of thing, and the form of every kind of thing unites with it, it follows that it is indeed universal form.
DISCIPLE Since all forms are to be found in universal form, I wonder whether the true beings of these constitute the true being of universal form, or whether it is some other.

MASTER The true beings of the forms found in universal form – that is what the true being of universal form actually is.

DISCIPLE If you can substantiate that idea, then surely the science of universal form is complete.

MASTER [F 5.8] We shall begin, therefore, from this point and state: having introduced all substances and evaluated all forms, we have found among them none more complete and all-inclusive of form than that of reason. In other words, we have found that this form of-and-by-itself knows all, and of-and-by-itself unites with all form. Because of this we have recognized that all forms are present within its own true being. Furthermore, we have ascertained that reason perceives all forms of-and-by-itself. Herein is proof that these forms are at one with its true being, and that its true being cannot be other than a unity because it is the totality and entirety of them, since all forms are united with its true being in a spiritual union. It must be true, therefore, that the form of reason is the form that brings together and consolidates the unity of every form within its own integrity.

In addition, we have found that reason does not perceive hyle by itself but rather through the medium of the rational soul and the senses, since hyle is not encompassed within its true being; and since reason does not perceive hyle by itself because of hyle’s externality: the forms that it does apprehend must be other than external to it. And if not external to its true being, they must be within it.

DISCIPLE What proof is there that all forms exist within the true being of reason? This may be true not of all but only of some forms; although it must be granted that some are present there.

MASTER Do you grant that all forms exist in reason in an elemental and spiritual reality?
DISCIPLE Why should I accept that?

MASTER [F 5.9] Inasmuch as many forms are present in individual reason because this by its own power discovers and perceives each and every form in itself, how do you regard universal reason? Must not every sort of form be found within its form?

DISCIPLE [F 5.10] In what way are all forms to be found within individual reason?

MASTER Do not overlook the thinking of the rational soul and its continual return to what lies within the reason, and how it imagines the forms of things either by the illusion of night vision or by true vision and recognition (p. 157; p. 222, bottom).

14 Reason embraces all forms

The form of reason is general to all forms and encompasses all; and the forms of things derive from that of reason.

DISCIPLE I have now reflected in all these ways and found them to be as you said. But please expand the idea that all forms are present within the true being of reason, and show that the form of reason is the form of all things and the form of all things that of reason.

MASTER Here you have the proofs:

(1) [F 5.11] I postulate that the form of reason perceives all forms and they unite with its true being. Now if all forms unite with the true being of any existent, then all forms exist therein. Consequently all forms exist within the true being of reason.

(2) The substance of reason sustains all form within itself. Now if anything sustains all form within itself, its true being is all form. Consequently the true being of reason is all form.

(3) Whatever exists in anything as its specific being determines its nature. And all forms exist in reason as its specific being. Therefore the forms of things determine the nature of reason. Also, the forms of things determine the nature of reason. And whatever determines the nature of anything is its form. Consequently the forms of things are the forms of reason.
(4) Also, the form of reason determines the true being of matter. And the forms of things determine the true being of matter. Consequently the forms of things are the forms of reason.

(5) Also, the form of reason sustains all forms as their specific being. And whatever sustains the form of anything as its specific being is one with it. Consequently the form of reason and the forms of all things sustained in it are one.

(6) Also, the form of reason unites with the forms of all things in a spiritual unity. And whatever unites with something else in a spiritual unity becomes one with it. Consequently the form of reason is one with all forms of things.

Also, the form of reason and all forms of things are one. And whatever is one with another is that very other. Consequently the form of reason is itself the form of all things. But the forms of things determine their species. Therefore the form of reason determines the species of things.

Also, the form of reason determines the species of things. And the differentiation of things is the generality of their forms. Consequently the form of reason is the generality of the forms of things.

These proofs will demonstrate to you that the form of reason is general to all forms, since all exist within it. What this will reveal to you altogether is that the forms of things exist in reason in an elemental being, and in themselves they exist in a compound being. Now since compound being derives from elemental, and compound and elemental belong to a single genus, it follows that the existence of the forms of things in themselves derives from the existence of the form of reason. Furthermore, it follows from this line of proof that the form of reason is general to all forms, and that all exist within its form.
15  The mediation of the senses

All forms do not reside within reason, because in that case reason would not require the senses for their perception. What is present in reason is spiritual concepts, and hyle-possessing sense objects are external to it and perceptible only through sense inasmuch as sense is intermediate between both extremes and with similarity to both. Nevertheless, even though everything is not constituted of reason, the totality of existence is present in it in an elemental being; forms are united there in a spiritual and intrinsic union, not a physical one.

DISCIPLE      If all forms exist within that of reason in an elemental being and compound existence derives from elemental, it follows that the form of reason is the root and source of all form; and that being the case, it follows that all forms originate in its form, and that this is the universal form for all others. But how can I agree that all forms exist within that of reason?

MASTER      Why can you not agree?

DISCIPLE      Because I am aware that reason requires the senses in order to perceive sensible forms. Thus it does not of itself perceive hyle-possessing objects, but rather requires the mediation of the senses. This means that sense-perceptible forms are external to its being, since if all forms were within its being, there would be no need of senses for their perception.

MASTER      [F 5.13] I am not maintaining that all things exist within reason nor that all constitute reason itself, because of those that possess hyle; but I do affirm that intelligible concepts exist in reason and that they are reason; but hyle-possessing sense-known bodies do not exist in reason nor do they constitute it, since they are external to its real being. Consequently the only way reason can perceive hyle-possessing objects is through the mediation of sense, which is harmonious with the nature of reason in that it stands midway between the spirituality of reason and the body of hyle.
Now, what prevents reason from perceiving hyle-possessing objects on its own is that rational perception takes place by contact between its own form and that of the object, and their union; but since the substance of reason is rarefied and the sense-perceptibles are dense, and what is elemental cannot unite with what is dense without an intermediary that resembles both extremes, it follows that reason can perceive the sensibles by means of sense perception only because the sensing substance resembles both extremes, since it is intermediate between the body of sensible forms and the spirituality of reason.

This can be made clear in the following way: knowledge is acquired through the union of two forms, that of the knower and that of the known, without intermediary. This union of the two forms takes place according to their similarity and affinity. But the form of the rational soul has no similarity with physical forms, inasmuch as the form of the rational soul is spiritual while sensible forms are corporeal. This prevents the form of the rational soul from uniting with physical forms unless there is an intermediary that is compatible with both extremes.

Furthermore, since the sensing soul and nature (II, 12) stand midway between the rational soul and body, the form of the rational soul is precluded from joining and uniting of and by itself directly with forms of body. Now following this line of thought you will reflect on the sensing soul’s perception of sense forms by means of sense organs and the atmosphere because of the resemblance between these instrumentalities, including the atmosphere, and the two extremes, that is, the perceiving substance and the forms perceived.

[F 5.14] Now although it is taught that everything exists in reason and comes forth from reason (V, 4 and 15), this does not mean that everything is made up of reason nor that any elemental substance is composed of another one; because the composition of what is made of something else takes place in actuality, but reason is not of that sort since its substance is elemental. Rather, what is meant is that the whole of existence is present in reason in an elemental being since the true being of reason, is the generality of forms; that is, the forms of things are united within its true being in a spiritual and inherent union, not in a physical and accidental one.
16 The receptivity of reason

It is reason that endowed every form with existence and identity, just as matter bestowed all body. Reason has no particular form but does have universal form. This is evident because the more ethereal a substance is, the more receptive of many forms, while the denser, the fewer until the ultimate of one is reached.

DISCIPLE I understand. But please explain further about the form of reason being the totality of the form of things.

MASTER [F 5.15] Since the form of reason knows the form of everything, all forms must in consequence be conjoined with it and exist within it because all forms have been created in it, or in other words have been united within its true being intrinsically in a spiritual union. It is because of this that the form of reason is general to all forms. That being the case, there must be a form that gives existence and identity to every form, just as it was matter that gave body to all.

DISCIPLE [F 5.16] I have read experts on this subject who agree that reason is without particular form. They echoed the reasoning of those who said that if reason had a particular form, that form would prevent perception of all other outside forms.

MASTER They did not teach that reason lacks a form of its own but that it lacks particular or peculiar form; thus they did not deny that reason has a universal form, because that is judged to be the comprisal of all forms. Hence if you will consider what causes substances to perceive forms, you will then understand the truth of our teaching that the form of reason is universal; and you will understand how such a form can by its own inherency perceive all forms.

DISCIPLE How does that take place?
MASTER  [F 5.17] Can you doubt that the more ethereal and elemental a
substance is, the more receptive it will be of many different forms, and these forms in it will
be better and finer? And the contrary.

DISCIPLE  This is not what I doubt, except that I don’t understand what causes
it to be so.

MASTER  What causes it is this: the composition of a compound prevents its
penetration by forms because a barrier exists between its true being and those of forms.
But there is nothing in elemental substance to stand between it and forms, and for this
reason they are not barred from penetrating. In consequence, the higher and finer an
 elemental substance is, the more receptive it will be to a variety of forms and the better it
conforms to every shape; for if elemental substance were receptive to and concomitant with
one shape only, attending and supporting only one form, then there would be no difference
between it and compound substance.

If this is the case, then sense-perceptible substance because of its density cannot
accept multiple forms but can accompany one only. This is why the more elemental and
 purer the rational substances are, the more receptive they must be of forms, and in them
will be found a greater and more manifest homogeneity of forms than in the lower ones like
nature and the vital principles. The same is true until the most ethereal and elemental of all
substances is reached, or the substance of reason; and so this must be the most receptive
and cumulative of forms within its true being and unity.

Furthermore, since the substance of reason ranks highest as the counterpart of the
lowest or physical substance and this latter receives only one form, in consequence of this
the substance of reason must accept and sustain all forms.

Correspondingly, of course, the more the substances descend and approximate
body, the weaker and less luminous they must be for receiving forms and the more like
body in receiving fewer and fewer of them; and the converse.
17 Will, the source of form

Every form exists fully in will, but matter receives according to its own capacity and not in the measure of the potency of will. Forms in causes are more perfect than in effects; and as Plato taught, forms are created on lower levels by contemplation from higher ones. This contemplation is comparable to an outflow of potencies and luminosities.

DISCIPLE Let us admit that the lower substances receive forms from reason, some more, some fewer. But what is to be construed from your statement that the substance of reason is more receptive of all forms than are other substances? And where does reason get these forms?

MASTER [F 5.18] The matter that is appropriate to the form of reason, that is, the most elevated extreme of universal matter, receives the form of reason, which sustains all forms, from Will, in which each and every form exists fully and completely, which is the sum total of all, containing all. Now matter did not receive according to the capability of Will, but rather in the measure of its own fitness to receive. I have already informed you in previous discussions that the luminosity acquired by matter from will is infinitesimal in comparison with what is present there (IV, 20, p. 228, bottom).

[F 5.19] You must realize that this perfect form belongs potentially to Will on the creation side, but actually to Will on the Creator’s side. This is because nothing is the same in the higher ranges as in the lower; forms in causes are fuller and more complete than in effects, because forms are caused in effects through contemplation by causes directed to effects and through the parallelism between them.

In accordance with this, forms must first exist in Will in full perfection as far as may be, wholly ordered and complete. The same applies to the extent anything is closer to Will until the final and nethermost form is reached, whereupon form will cease. The purport of these words is what Plato taught.

DISCIPLE What did Plato teach?
Plato held that forms are created in reason through a contemplation by will, and created in the universal soul through a contemplation by universal reason; and similarly they are created in nature and in substance through a contemplation by the universal soul into nature. He established a rule in this matter for the creation of rational forms whether by thought or imagination in the individual consciousness through a contemplation by reason directed to it.

DISCIPLE  [F 5.20] What do you mean by this “contemplation directed to substances”?

MASTER      It means that there is a correspondence between them and a flow of potencies and luminosities from some to others, because all are lower than the primary substance, which is self-activated as you have already learned from previous explanations. (III, 13, end)

18  The spaceless aggregation of forms

Multiple forms can merge into one because of not being constricted by space nor hindered by variety. All forms exist in universal matter and a variety of them in the rational soul. Just as a physical object can be distinguished from its accidents, so can the rational soul distinguish each part from each other one, as can reason also. Their existence in reason is reflected in primary matter.

DISCIPLE  The foregoing arguments have convinced me that the form of reason is the form of forms and that all forms subsist within its own; furthermore, that reason is the totality of the forms of things. And surely, since lower forms are present in higher ones, having originated in them, reason necessarily consists of whatever is lower; and similarly the soul and nature are whatever is under them, because the union of lower forms within higher ones resembles the union of rational forms within the form of reason. But even so, I am still in doubt about how so many forms can be gathered into one, and how they can be in accord, since they are all intrinsically different.
MASTER  We have already reached a sufficient degree of certainty through earlier proofs, so please bear them in mind. But for now I may say that [F 5.21] many different forms are not prevented from gathering together in a single sustainer, unless they occupy space; but if they do not, there is no hindrance to their convergence, as has already been pointed out.

Now since the forms gathered within the form of reason are not dispersed, being united within its true being, and the substance of reason is elemental: it is evident that they do not obstruct space; rather, they and the space they occupy, which is the substance of reason, are one and the same. And since the substance of reason is elemental, and the forms that it contains are not dispersed but united within its true being, reason is therefore receptive and supportive of everything without being crowded by any because it holds all within its own unity, which is its true being, in a sustainment of inherent unity.

Consequently you should observe this idea carefully and apply it to all substances so that you may compare their sustainment of forms with that of another; namely, when you consider the existence of forms in reason, you will find it comparable to their existence in the rational soul and to the existence of the nine categories in substance. This is why reason is said to be the place of rational forms, and hyle the place of natural ones. It has also been taught that just as hyle is a potency that is receptive of sensible forms, so the rational soul is receptive of rational forms. In this same way you may also consider the existence of all forms in primary matter.

DISCIPLE  What way is that?

MASTER  You will find that all forms exist in universal form, and similarly you will find nine categories in substance. In the same way you will find that differing things are present in the rational soul that supports them, and their existence in it is not hindered because of the presence of some in others. For just as a physical object and its concomitants are one, when indeed they are diverse and disparate, but in fact the rational soul distinguishes every part from every other even when joined and united: in just such a way when all are conjoined and united although discrete in their true beings, reason nevertheless separates them from each other and distinguishes among them.
In consideration of this, all things should conform to the same pattern as far as primary matter is concerned, like the pattern of the relation of body to soul and of forms to reason. For if all forms exist in reason, how much more must they exist in primary matter! And just as their existence in reason is reflected by their existence in primary matter, so the above must apply successively.

DISCIPLE If forms are sustained by reason and the rational soul in the same way that universal matter sustains universal form, do you believe that matter is therefore capable of knowledge? And is not knowledge a form?

19 The hierarchy of inclusiveness

Knowledge is the union of reason with the to-be-known form, and the same is the case with sense knowledge, although this is at a lower level than the union of universal form with universal matter. The sequence is as follows: form encompasses matter; reason embraces the soul; the soul comprehends body; and above these, Will encompasses form, while God embraces Will.

Are rational forms supported in each other as are some of the forms of hyle? This is really a matter of sense perception; but it is true that quantity, quality and other genera coincide in substance. Primary matter supports all forms; reason and the rational soul support rational forms; substance supports the nine categories, and in the same way quantity supports color and shape. Form is relative: the lower is always hyle for the higher, and there is no absolute form apart from primary or creative reason (called “Active Intellect” or “Agent Intellect” in medieval philosophical parlance).

MASTER [F 5.22] The theory of rational knowledge is that reason unites with some rationally perceived form. The same is taught in connection with sense knowledge. But this individual or particular union is not like the union of universal form with universal matter but rather is subordinate to it and hence will not be designated as knowledge. But although not called knowledge, nevertheless the union of rational forms with reason ought not on that account to be thought superior, even though the concept of primary union may be more notable than that of a secondary one.
[F 5.23] However, what you should realize in connection with this idea is that form encompasses matter just as reason embraces the soul and this comprehends body; will embraces form exactly as each one of these includes another; and the supreme and holy God encompasses Will and whatever matter and form exists within it, incomparably and exemplarily.

DISCIPLE Why did you say that the subsistence of forms in the soul and in reason is like their subsistence in hyle (V,18)? And also, we have found that certain of the forms borne in substance are sustained in others, as for instance quality borne in quantity, but we have not found any rational forms to be sustained in others.

MASTER [F 5.24] It is important for you to realize that even though quality adjoins quantity, this is true only with respect to sense perception; but certainly quantity and quality do concur, and for that reason color and shape accompany body generally, and in addition to these other genera also concur in substance.

DISCIPLE I understand.

MASTER Take this as a rule and in conformity with it consider the existence of all forms concurrently in primary matter.

DISCIPLE How can I do that?

MASTER Primary matter’s support of all forms is exactly like reason’s and the rational soul’s sustainment of the forms they perceive, and like substance’s support of the nine categories, and as is more manifest, quantity’s support of color and shape.

DISCIPLE According to this, reason, the soul and all elemental substances generally must resemble hyle. But you said previously that they were forms.
MASTER  [F 5.25] It is incumbent on the inferior to serve as hyle for the superior, since the superior acts on the inferior. That is why the philosophers have refused to describe any substance as form in an absolute sense except primary reason, which to them is known as the Active Intellect.

20 The hierarchy of visibility

Primary form is elemental and transcending, while final form is corporeal and compound. Between them are gradations: the form of Reason as the primary transcending form is followed by that of the rational soul, of the sensing soul, of the vegetal soul, of Nature, of substance, of body, of shape, of color. Transcending forms are latent in physical ones so that manifest being may reflect unmanifest.

DISCIPLE Please tell me why some forms are more manifest and others less so,

MASTER  [F 5.26] The more a form descends toward finiteness and corporeality, the more evident it is to sense, as in the case of color, which of all forms is the most conspicuous to sense. Shape is less evident than color, mass less than shape, substance less than mass, nature less than substance, soul less than Nature, and Reason less than soul.

DISCIPLE What causes these shapes to be more conspicuous or more inconspicuous?

MASTER It happens because the primary universal form that combines with primary matter is elemental and spiritual, while the final form is corporeal and compound. Between these extremes are intermediates that link and unite them. Now, the form that stands closer to primary spiritual form will be more ethereal and inconspicuous, while on the other hand the one that stands closer to final corporeal form will be more dense, more conspicuous.

DISCIPLE Please illustrate that in terms of the forms of the substances.

MASTER This will illustrate it: the form of Reason is the primary spiritual form joined to matter. Following it is the form of the rational soul, the sensing soul, the vegetal soul, Nature, substance, body, shape and color.
DISCIPLE      It seems to me that spiritual forms must be latent in the corporeal ones so that manifest being may be the reflection of unmanifest.

MASTER      Yes, it must be so.

DISCIPLE      Can you make this clear?

MASTER      [F 5.27] This is how to demonstrate that spiritual forms are hidden within corporeal ones: the soul is concealed together with its potencies in the physical body, and each one of its potencies combines with that form which shares the same degree of rarefaction; it distinguishes the form of quality and quantity from that of body, and afterward differentiates the form of body from that of nature, the form of Nature from that of the Soul, the form of the Soul from that of Reason, and the form of Reason from primary matter.

You should realize that whoever learns well the differentiae of these forms and understands the activities of each of the substances in another has attained the goal of wisdom and blessedness.

21  The hierarchy of activity

The higher acts on the lower; primary spiritual matter and form act on everything, governed only by degree of remoteness from source. The action of primary form is to endow every entity with existence, but its activity is not easily revealed. The higher any form is, the more unitary because it is closer to primary form, which is the source of all unity and excellence.

DISCIPLE      What manner of existence do all these substances have in body?

MASTER      The arrangement is this: the higher acts on the lower. Now, primary spiritual matter and primary spiritual form must definitely act on everything; but the manifestation of this activity varies because of remoteness from source. For since primary matter sustains the cosmos, it must be involved in the whole of it; similarly, primary form that is joined to matter must exist throughout the cosmos because of matter’s presence throughout.
DISCIPLE   How does primary form act on the cosmos?

MASTER   [F 5.28a] Primary form’s act on the cosmos is no other than existence, since it is this form that constitutes the true being of each and every existent.

DISCIPLE   We have already established that this primary form is the form of reason (p.264, bottom). How, then, can it be found in everything and constitute the true being of everything?

MASTER   Tell me, what is the form of reason?

DISCIPLE   [F 5.28b] It is the form that comprises all the forms of the whole of existence.

MASTER   Which form is the most ethereal and most elevated?

DISCIPLE   The form of reason.

MASTER   And does denser and lower existence derive from more ethereal and more elevated?

DISCIPLE   Yes, it does.

MASTER   Now, since the form of reason comprises the form of the whole of existence and is superior to every form of every existent, and every inferior derives from a superior, what do you deduce from this?

DISCIPLE   I definitely deduce that [F 5.28c] the existence of all forms derives from that of the form of reason, and that the form of reason constitutes the true being of each and every form, exactly as you said (V,16). But please show me the activities of the forms of the other substances in the cosmos, as you have shown me the action of the form of reason.

MASTER   It is very difficult to reveal the activity of spiritual forms in body. But it is necessary for you to realize that since the act of primary form that constitutes the true being of everything and endows it with existence takes place in body, it is all the more inescapable that the acts of other forms lower in the scale should be found there; and when you give thought to the substances composed of the elements as well as those above the elements, you will witness the activity in them more clearly and evidently.
DISCIPLE  I quite understand that. But please help me to know what causes form when it is higher to be more unified, more stable in matter and more closely attached to it? And the converse.

MASTER  This is caused by the degree of remoteness from source, as has often been explained (IV,15; IV,18 and elsewhere), because the closer a form stands to primary form or to the passive unity that succeeds the active or creative Unity, the more elemental, stable and similar it will be to the primary form in unity and stability because of its proximity to the Unity that is the fountainhead of all unity and power. In the same way you may also reflect on the unity and multiplicity of form.

22 Description of universal matter and form

Primary matter may be described as a self-existing substance that although unitary in itself supports diversity and accepts all forms. Universal form establishes the existence of all forms and is total wisdom, absolute illumination. Although it is substantial, it is not a substance in an absolute sense; but also not an accident.

DISCIPLE  [F 5.29] I am quite convinced by what you have said that universal matter and form exist. But now please make clear to me the definition or limits of each one.

MASTER  It is impossible to define each one because there is no genus above them to provide a point of departure for a definition; but it is in fact possible to describe them because of the properties that accompany them. A description of primary matter, then, based on its own distinctive characteristic, is that it is a self-existing substance that supports diversity and is one in number (I, 10). Secondly, it is described as a substance that accepts all forms. Universal form, however, is described as a substance that establishes the existence of all forms (I, 13); and secondly it is described as total wisdom and purest illumination.
DISCIPLE     How can primary form be called a substance, since it is sustained in matter? (III, 37)

MASTER     Undoubtedly form is an accident when considered in relation to its sustainment in matter; but in itself it is a substance. And so this form was called substantial rather than substance in an absolute sense. And certainly, since an accident is not one solely by reason of being sustained, but also because of its nonexistence once separated from its support, primary form therefore cannot be an accident merely by virtue of being sustained in matter.

DISCIPLE     Well, if form is a substance, do you consider that the six properties that identify substance are present in it, or not?\textsuperscript{152}

MASTER     It is quite clear that form fails to display two of the six properties, namely that substance is not present in a subject, and that it accepts diversity.\textsuperscript{153} But form although borne in matter is not supported as an accident in a subject would be; and as for accepting diversity, this is proper to the subject substance.

\section*{23 The activity, value and origin of matter and form}

The correlative functions of matter and form, and the value of each relative to the other. The origin of each, matter from the primary Existent and form from its quality, establishing a twofold.

DISCIPLE     You have shown me what matter is and what form is. Now please explain the characteristic quality of matter and of form.

MASTER     Matter sustains and form is sustained; matter is unmanifest and form manifest; matter is fulfilled through form, and form completes the existence of matter; matter is differentiated and form differentiates; matter is separate and form separative.

DISCIPLE     Which of them, then, is of greater value?

\textsuperscript{152} Aristotle: \textit{Categories}, V, 3a 7 to 4b 18.

\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Categories}, V, 3a 7; 4a 10).
MASTER The one that sustains.

DISCIPLE Why is that, since the one that is sustained is the one that endows the sustainer with existence and consummates its true being?

MASTER That which sustains is of greater worth since that which is sustained requires it for its own coming-into-being.

DISCIPLE If that is so, in what way can form be a substance when it requires matter for its own existence, notwithstanding that a property of substance is that it is self-existent?

MASTER For primary form to exist in the sense of factual self-existence is impossible because the only way it can have existence is in concert with matter; nevertheless in theory and potentially it is possible. Herein lies the difference between this and accident, because accident is not understood to be self-existent.

DISCIPLE Can form be of greater value than matter in some way?

MASTER Form is indeed of greater value in that it establishes matter and endows it with being; and also in that form resembles the soul, while matter is more like the body.

DISCIPLE By what means did matter and form come into existence?

MASTER By the primary Existent and its characteristic quality (i.e. wisdom and unity), and also because the two are placed under the one and are its expression. If creation were unitary, there would be no differentiation, since differentiation takes place after the one. Further, since nonbeing lacks form, being must possess it. Again, since existence was necessarily finite, it must be bounded by form inasmuch as form is what encompasses reality.

Furthermore, since the primary creative Unity lacks hyle, its succeeding unity must consist of hyle, whereby it gains unity and becomes a twofold, that is, a subject hyle and a sustained unity. Finally, since the primary Unity is self-sufficient as a creator, the succeeding unity must require support; and so there must be a hyle to sustain it; and thereby they become a twofold.
24 The four categories of existence

Four questions may be asked about any existent: whether it exists, what it is, of what sort and why. Another classification is in terms of necessary, possible and impossible.

DISCIPLE [F 5.30] I have often heard said in connection with the elemental substances that the question of why they exist does not arise, but more importantly whether they exist, what they are, and of what sort. How, then, can the question be raised in connection with matter and form as to why they exist?

MASTER It is true that elemental substances do not admit any inquiry about why they exist beyond the fact of their existence; and yet there is to be sure a question of existence in that the why and the what become one, since they are elemental unities. This is why it is taught of primary matter, primary form and of all elemental substances in general that there is no cause for their existence other than God their Creator, since any efficient cause is beyond the nature of what is caused; but nothing exists beyond the elemental substances except the high and holy One who created them. This is why they are described as eternal, because of the eternalness of the One who created them.

In this chapter I shall designate for you an adequate epitome that you may use as a guide. I maintain that existence from the highest to the lowest extreme is divisible into four categories: whether it exists, what it is, of what sort and why. Of greatest value is that one of which the sole inquiry is whether, not what, of what sort or why, as with the supreme and holy One. Under this is that of which the inquiry is what, not of what sort or why, as with reason. Under this in turn is that of which the inquiry is what and of what sort, not why, as with the soul. Finally under this is that of which the inquiry is what, of what sort and why, as with nature and her products, Each of these categories is sequent in numerical order.154

DISCIPLE In what way?

MASTER The question whether it exists is placed first in order because it refers to existence alone. What it is, bears resemblance to the two because it consists of two, or genus and difference. Of what sort resembles the three because it is sustained in the what and is related to that. And the why is like the four, since it relates to the what sort, the what and the whether, making three.

154 The four levels of being and the applicability of the four questions to each is summed up as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(An est? Quid est? Quale est? Quare est?)
DISCIPLE Can existence be classified in some other way?

MASTER [F 5.31] Of course existence can be specified in other more general categories such as necessary, possible and impossible; and indeed, what is necessary in the One, the great and sublime Creator; what is possible is whatever is acted upon by That; and what is impossible is the nonexistence or absence of being.

DISCIPLE How valuable, how magnificent this conception is! What is necessary is what eternally exists and is changeless; what is possible is its contrary and so is passive, diverse and mutable, which is the innate nature of the possible. Consequently matter is called the primary possibility according to this reasoning.

MASTER You are quite right. But have you understood from this teaching what the purpose of the existence of matter and form is?

DISCIPLE What I have learned from you in this lesson is truly marvellous! Namely, that since the One, the primary Creator, is necessary, it consequently is itself the sole One; and since the passive is the possible, this cannot be just itself, but must be both a this and a that, and hence must be both a sustainer and sustained.

MASTER Well understood! And now you may ask whatever you need to know.
The need for sustainer and sustained

A perfect creation requires both sustaining and sustained, and these differing functions of matter and form point to the existence of a will responsible for the creation of any entity and its opposite, each one delimiting the other.

DISCIPLE Since it was necessary for the passive creation to be twofold, why was one of them sustaining and the other sustained?

MASTER It is a property of sovereignty to bring about perfection. And to produce both a sustainer and something sustained is more perfect than to effect one or the other alone. Furthermore, since the creative One is neither sustaining nor sustained, the manifold creation must of necessity be both sustaining and sustained. If it had been sustaining only or sustained only, it would have been entirely unitary and lacking diversification.

Again, since the sublime and holy primary Creator is all-sufficient and complete, Its passive creation will perforce be deficient and incomplete, with the sustainer requiring something to sustain, the sustained in need of a sustainer, and neither of them complete except by virtue of the other.

Again, since it was requisite for a passive being to be created in contrast to the active one, and the active one is neither limited nor circumscribed, the passive being had to be limited and circumscribed, and being circumscribed had to have some sort of boundary consequent on its circumscription; for whatever is defined requires a demarcation, and what is delimited entails a definition. Since this is the case, a matter must exist that will sustain, and a form that will be sustained. Again, [F 5.32a] the difference between matter and form indicates that a will exists that is responsible for creating both an entity and its contrary.

Furthermore, since it was necessary for one and the other, whether sustained or sustaining, to be bounded, the sustainer must be defined by the non-sustainer and vice versa. Moreover, since the passive creation had to be twofold, one of them had to be self-existent and the other not; and the self-existent one the sustainer with the non-self-existent one sustained. It was impossible for both to be non-self-existent, since in that case a third would have to exist, to sustain them both.
26  Matter as unitary, unmanifest and encompassed

Why is primary matter one and form many? Why is it unmanifest? Why is it considered to have potential existence? Why is it contained or encompassed?

DISCIPLE  I quite understand why matter and form exist. But please explain why primary matter is one and forms many.

MASTER  If you are asking about primary substantial form that combines with matter (V, 22; III, 37) it is indeed one as already explained when we discussed the form of reason (IV, 12), and this form, although it sustains all forms, is nevertheless intrinsically a unity and the forms it holds are not diversified but united within its true being in a spiritual union.

If, however, you are asking about accidental forms, this form is not diversified in their true beings but rather in their subjects because of (the degree of their) remoteness from source (IV, 15 and 18). And so even though they are differentiated, they are nevertheless a unity because all share in the concept of form; and since form is inherently one and not diversified, it becomes so only because of its subject matter.

DISCIPLE  [F 5.32b] Why was form created manifest and matter unmanifest?

MASTER  In the case of the rationals it was because of the joining of the form of reason with the forms of rational objects and their union in matter like men at an academy; but among the sensibles it was because the forms are corporeal and matter is spiritual in comparison with the form sustained in it. Also, because matter exists apart from the true being of the soul and reason, while form does not; and because matter is enwrapped, but form enwraps. Matter, too, is more like nonbeing, while form is more like being (V, 10), as we have already shown. And finally, matter’s existence is potential while that of form is truly actual and complete.\(^\text{155}\)

\(^{155}\) On matter as potentiality and form as actuality, see Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 412a 10. On the imperceptibility of matter see Plotinus II, iv, 12: “discerned by none of the senses,” “grasped only by a mental process.”
DISCIPLE      How is that?

MASTER      It was only through form that matter achieved completion and existence. It was because of this that matter was moved in the first place to accept form, which is to achieve completeness. But this has already been adequately covered (V,10).

DISCIPLE      [F 5.33] Why is matter contained, and form its container?

MASTER      Because form is the unity that is passive to the primary Unity that encompasses the universe and within which the universe exists; and since it is Unity that joins together and unites anything to prevent it from multiplying and dispersing, it must therefore confine matter. But since the nature of matter is to multiply and divide, it must be brought together, confined and encompassed by unity.

27 The separate existence of matter and form

How could matter and form exist separately? How could form exist in the wisdom of God?

DISCIPLE      Since the elements of every compound can be identified in themselves, please tell me in what manner matter and form exist separately.

MASTER      [F 5.34a] Form existed inherently in the wisdom of the supreme and glorious God, and then was combined with matter; but this was timeless.

DISCIPLE      How can that be proved?

MASTER      In the first place, the differentiation between matter and form; in the second place, their separateness when form is diversified; and third, when forms are separated from matter.
DISCIPLE  If the joining of matter and form was timeless, then one did not exist without the other even for an instant. If this is the case, then how can what you say be true, that form existed in the wisdom of the supreme and glorious God before it was combined with matter?

MASTER  You should understand that when I say that form inhered in the wisdom of God, it was because of the differentiation between matter and form; and when I say that it was subsequently combined with matter, you should realize that they are combined with each other although they differ in true being. We shall therefore put it this way: the difference between their diversity of true being and their unity in existence is not physical but rational.

DISCIPLE  [F 5.34b] Please provide examples of the existence of matter and form individually within the wisdom of God.

MASTER  An example of this is the existence of a concept of spiritual form in the soul; it then unites with matter and comes forth into actuality. Similarly this form exists in reason and thereupon comes forth into the soul and unites with it. But the form in the wisdom of the supreme and almighty Ancient of Days proceeds from potentiality to actuality timelessly and so is not free of matter for an instant. However, the form that issues from the soul is not thus.

DISCIPLE  [F 5.35] In connection with the combining of matter and form, please give an example of how that takes place.

MASTER  An example of this is the union of light with the atmosphere, of color with an object, of the soul with the body, of reason with the soul, of sense with a sense object, of intellect with idea. Similarly, too, its passage from potentiality to actuality will be exemplified by sense’s perception of a sense object and intellect’s perception of an idea. This is why it is taught that the universe exists by virtue of the wisdom of God on high, His contemplation, His command.
28 The limits of matter, form and reason

Do matter and form have limits? Can they be limitless in one direction but not in another? How does this apply to form? To reason?

DISCIPLE Would you say that matter and form have definite limits?

MASTER This is attested by the dissolution of each except in combination with the other; and because form divides and multiplies on account of matter, and would not do so unless matter were contiguous, since if it were not, form could not be subject to division or change.

DISCIPLE Might not matter and form extend illimitably in other directions even with a common boundary where they unite?

MASTER How can they possibly be illimitable, since there are two of them, each one bounded by the other and modified by it, matter having been shaped by form and form materialized by matter? However, form is regarded as illimitable from the direction whence it comes to matter, or from will; but on the lower side it is limited by the categories, which are the (lower) limit of creation.

DISCIPLE But how is it possible for form to have a boundary in one direction and be limitless in another?

MASTER It is certainly not easy to mark off form from will, since such a distinction exists only because of matter. That is why form is regarded as indistinguishable from will, and will is limited only in the sense that it has been created. Form must therefore be confined in that direction, since creation has a beginning and so a boundary, which is the beginning of the enwrapment of matter by form.

DISCIPLE Please explain this.

MASTER The teaching is that form at the point where it is created and where its union with matter began is limited. Therefore once form is conjoined with matter it is confined because of the limitedness of matter when the union was initiated.
[F 5.36a] It is for this reason that the substance of reason is said to be bounded at both its extremes, on the upper side because of will above it, and on the lower because of hyle, which is external to its nature.

DISCIPLE How can you say that reason is bounded in both directions? It has already been shown in connection with the substance of reason and the other elemental substances that they are bounded from the upper direction, having been created from matter and form, since each of them is bounded by its cause and all of them by the primary Cause; but on the lower side they are boundless, because they themselves are causes there (III,57, p.186 (Master)).

MASTER [F 5.36b] It is true that all elemental substances are bounded from the upper direction and boundless from the lower since they are in sequence and are spiritual and elemental. But since hyle is dense and physical it was by that fact beyond the true being of reason, which is why reason and all elemental substances are said to be bounded from this direction in contradistinction to body that befalls hyle, and this difference causes a boundary to exist.

29 The possibility of a formless matter

Is matter illimitable? How is it shaped and delimited? Is some matter free of form?

DISCIPLE You have maintained that matter and form are circumscribed; but may it not be true that every single matter possesses matter and every single form possesses form on into infinity?

MASTER If that were so, existence would not terminate at the lower extreme.

DISCIPLE Well, perhaps matter is illimitable.

MASTER How can that be so when form defined it and made it subject to limitation?

DISCIPLE What is the reasoning for form’s being the definer of matter?

MASTER The proof is that anything sensible or rational is defined and bounded by its form and shape. And the extremity of sensible substance is form or shape, while the extremity of rational substance is difference and form.
DISCIPLE  Do you believe that some matter can be found that lacks form?

MASTER  For any matter to exist without some form is impossible, since the whole of it sustains spiritual form.

DISCIPLE  [F 5.37] Why can there not be a formless matter?

MASTER  Because it is form that confines matter. And also because it is characteristic of form that its true being should bestow itself, and that is why nothing exists without it. Further, because matter gained existence through form, since existence is by virtue of form; and consequently matter is moved to accept form so that it can as it were pass from the haplessness of nonbeing to the felicity of being.

But in fact it is possible for matter to exist apart from any form since some part of matter lacks spiritual form and does not possess the primary constituent form of the true being of primary matter but the secondary one that constitutes the true being of elemental substances. Similarly some part of physical matter exists without certain forms, but also possesses certain others.

DISCIPLE  Please explain this to me.

MASTER  [F 5.38] Just picture matter as having two extremes, one ascending to the limit of creation or the beginning of the union of matter and form and the other descending to the brink of cessation. Now imagine that what is above the celestial sphere is of spiritual form; and imagine that as this ascends it becomes more unified, more elemental until it reaches the source of creation. Similarly envision that what descends from the height of the celestial sphere will be of physical form; and mark that as it descends lower and lower it will be more corporeal until it reaches the brink of cessation.
How can formless matter be imagined? If it is all-embracing, how can it be particularized?

DISCIPLE Yes, I have noted that and imagined and discovered exactly what you said. In accordance with this [F 5.39a] I perceive matter to be inherently a unity to which diversity came from form. Therefore please tell me: since matter surrounds and contains all things and all things exist in it, how can I possibly imagine its existence with spiritual form but without physical form?

MASTER Make your question more specific.

DISCIPLE Well, since elemental existence includes compound and spiritual spheres encompass physical ones, must not matter, reason and the soul embrace the celestial sphere just as this embraces the elements?

MASTER [F 5.39b] If you really took pains to imagine spiritual substance and realized that physical substance has the same relation to it as a bird to the atmosphere, you would not be in doubt about this.

DISCIPLE Please show me, then, how I can imagine this.

MASTER Withdraw your reason from physical substance and focus intently on spiritual substance until you reach the beginning of creation or the starting point of the union of form with matter, and then direct your reason downward. You will thereupon realize the truth of what I have taught you: the insignificance of physical substance relative to the immensity of spiritual substance. Now, as far as you can, compare created spiritual substance or matter combined with form to its original source or will and you will find that physical substance is the lesser.

Think of this also in terms of the celestial sphere and the earth, for if you conceive your soul to be as if stationed at the farthest height of the celestial sphere surveying the earth, you will judge your sight of the earth from the mid-heaven to be merely a tiny dot in comparison with the grandeur of the celestial sphere.

DISCIPLE That is certainly true.
Similarly, if you also reflect on what is thought to be the final limit of spiritual substance, you will see that the comparison between physical and spiritual substance and Will is the same as between the earth and the celestial sphere.

I have now envisioned this and found it to be as you said; you have convinced me by this teaching. But please provide for me a brief epitome to facilitate my better understanding.

Consider the outer limit of creation or the starting point of the union of form with matter, and imagine that Existent which is without beginning or end, the true being of the Creator. And imagine the totality of existence both spiritual and physical that exists within it, as you might picture some concept arising in your mind; for you will then realize that the power of the supreme and holy Creator is present in all that exists in Him. Similarly you will also come to see that the power and nature of the higher Existent is present in any lower from beginning to end and to the point of ultimate cessation. In this way you can envision the extension of matter and form from highest to lowest as one unbroken continuity.

I have now envisioned this and have learned that matter was established in the wisdom of the supreme omnipotent One exactly as the earth was established in the midst of the celestial sphere and that form envelops it just as sunlight envelops and permeates air and earth. But please explain why this form has been termed a luminosity.

Since the divine Word, by whose beholding form is imparted, is luminosity or a rational luminescence rather than a sensible one, any form imparted by it must also be an illuminant. And in addition, since it is the nature of light to disclose, penetrate and reveal the form of anything previously invisible, form likewise when combined with matter becomes visible after having been unmanifest, and because of matter comes into existence.
31 Unity as the binding principle

Do matter and form occupy space? Which one acts on the other? Did one exist before the other? Do they have beginning and end? What binds them together? How is this to be proved? How can unity be of dual nature, both strong and weak?

DISCIPLE Please tell me whether matter and form occupy space or not.

MASTER [F 5.42] Matter is said to be the place of form, based on the idea that it supports form and is sustained within it. In addition, Will is said to be the place of both together. What is to be understood here, however, is that each of them requires Will in order to possess existence and continuance. But true place is assigned in idea to the lowest extreme of form. The same may be said of time. And I have already made clear to you in earlier discussions that space is described in two aspects, spiritual and physical (11,14).

DISCIPLE That has now been made clear to me. But please disclose whether it is form that acts on matter or matter on form.

MASTER Form acts on matter, perfecting it and endowing it with existence; and matter does not act, inasmuch as its true being is subject to another, for it is inherently and solely receptive and is dependent or disposed to admit action.

DISCIPLE [F 5.43] Does matter actually exist before form? Or is form before matter?

MASTER How can one exist before the other when they have not been separate even for an instant, but rather have been bound together, as I have explained (IV, 4; V, 27)? Moreover, matter is intrinsically without structural existence, which is actual existence dependent on form, and for that reason its own existence was derived from that of form.

DISCIPLE Do you believe they were without beginning or end? Or did their existence have a beginning?

MASTER Since anything exists by reason of its contrary, being must come from nonbeing or nonexistence. And so matter comes from non-matter and form from non-form. Certainly if matter and form came into being by generation, and anything natural derived from its similar, this would go on indefinitely.
DISCIPLE [F 5.44] I understand that now. But tell me what it is that binds matter and form together, unites them, preserves their union, and why.

MASTER It is unity, which is their superior, since the union of matter and form takes place by virtue of the impress of unity on them. And since no median exists between the one and the two, know that by the same token no median lies between unity and matter-form.

DISCIPLE What proof is there that unity regulates matter and form?

MASTER Proof of this is the entire union of matter and form, steadfast, stable and enduring at the moment of their creation or at the inception of their union, wholly because of their proximity to the source of unity. In contrast, its multiplicity, dividedness, variety, difference, instability and termination at the point of cessation or at the final point of substances takes place because of its remoteness from the source of unity (IV, 19). Herein lies a very substantial confirmation that it is unity that preserves and sustains all things.

DISCIPLE [F 5.45a] How can it be that the potency of unity outramifies in both strength and weakness, when at first it was unity that existed in unsurpassable union, maintaining it in every way, and then at the end, the exact opposite?

MASTER This is owing to the diversity of matter, as I have so frequently explained (II, 21; IV, 14 et passim).
The longing for Goodness and the One

How can matter unite with its opposite? Is it mobile or immobile? What impels it to move to receive form? How can we know that its motion is toward the One? Does matter resemble the primary Existent?

DISCIPLE Since anything unites only with its similar, how can matter and form be united when there is no likeness between them?

MASTER That is what most abundantly reveals the power of the Almighty.

DISCIPLE [F 5.45b] Is matter stationary or mobile?

MASTER It is mobile for the purpose of receiving form. Now an example of its motion toward receiving form and form’s union with it is the soul’s motion, when in want of certain knowledge, toward acquiring and receiving it, and when the form of that knowledge is added to the soul and comes into being within it, the soul will thereby become knowing; that is, it sustains the form of that knowledge. Similarly when form is added to matter, matter thereby becomes informed and sustains form.

DISCIPLE [F 5.46] But what drives matter to move toward receiving form?

MASTER It is matter’s predilection for receiving what is good and satisfying in receiving form. The same may be said of the motion of all substances, in view of the fact that the motion of all substances is toward the One and for the sake of the One. This is because any and every existent is drawn to move in such a way that it may gain some of the goodness of the primary Existent.

But the movements that take place differ with the differing degrees of their proximity and remoteness. The closer any substance is to the primary Existent, the more readily will it gain for itself that goodness, while the more remote it is, the more it must gain this by prolonged or numerous and repeated motions; and the farther removed, the more its motion subsides. As an example of this, consider the celestial sphere and the earth.
DISCIPLE [F 5.47] What is the proof that the motion of anything mobile is toward the One and because of It?

MASTER The proof is that the motion of every mobile is toward receiving form; and form is an impress from the One. The One, however, is Goodness. The motion of everything, therefore, is for the sake of Goodness, which is the One. Now the proof of this is that no existent longs to be multiple; rather, all yearn to be one. All, therefore, desire unity.

DISCIPLE But what proof is there that the motion of matter and the other substances represents inclination and attraction?

MASTER [F 5.48] Since the meaning of inclination and attraction is the search for closeness and union with its object, and matter seeks union with form, its motion must be out of attraction and desire that it holds for form. The same may be said of anything that moves to seek form.

DISCIPLE [F 5.49] If the motion of every mobile and of matter in general toward receiving form is out of its longing for the primary Existent, there must be a resemblance between them, for longing and union belong to similars.

MASTER The only similarity between matter and the primary Existent lies in matter’s acquisition of illumination and splendor from that which exists it the true being of will. This impels it to move toward that and long for it; not, however for the purpose of acquiring the true being of will but rather the form created from it.
Matter’s propensity to accept form

Is there any resemblance between matter and form? If matter lacks form, how can it acquire knowledge? How is matter affected by Unity?

DISCIPLE [F 5.50] What resemblance is there between matter and form, when they are two fundamentally different substances, one of them sustaining and the other being sustained?

MASTER They do not resemble each other; but since matter receives form in itself, and form flows into matter in an urgent and impetuous stream, matter must be moved to receive it also so that form may be united with it. This is evidence that they are bound to will and obedient to it, because although fundamentally different, they nevertheless unite together.

DISCIPLE [F 5.51] Since matter moves to receive form because of its pursuit of goodness, which is Unity, it must for that reason have knowledge of that which it seeks. But we have already seen that it is by means of form that matter acquires knowledge (V, 19, p. 262).

MASTER Inasmuch as matter is closely related to Unity and Unity influences it, this must enable it to gain the power of perception and move toward Unity to receive completion from It; and when matter receives form, it becomes thereby knowing and perfected, with nothing else to be acquired.

Here there is a resemblance to the atmosphere, when in the morning only a little brightness mingles with it; but as the sun ascends high over it, the sky is replete with radiance and splendor and there is nothing further that it must acquire from the sun. The situation is similar with respect to primary matter, for since it is closely related to Unity some of Unity’s potency and splendor must influence it and kindle its desire for Unity.

Now in conformity with this, there will be an answer to whoever rejects any similarity between matter and the other substances and the primary Creator when he asserts that the motion of these substances is one of desire. The response is that by the very fact of matter’s affinity for Unity it will be compelled to acquire from it that illumination and inclination by virtue of which it kill be moved to it and desire it to the end that it may receive completion and pass from nonexistence to existence until will can invest it with universal form in actuality and unite with it, fulfilling its nature; whereupon it becomes reason (Cf. V, 17).
34 Universal affinity for the primary Creator

Everything seeks and moves toward the primary Creator, each according to its nature and rank; the closer to Unity, the more unitary its act.

DISCIPLE [F 5.52] This longing, this motion, does it pervade everything?

MASTER Truly so, because the longing for the primary Creator and motion toward It has been placed in all beings, yet differently in accordance with their differing degrees of nearness and remoteness.

DISCIPLE Please illustrate.

MASTER Particular hyle is drawn to particular form, as in the case of the hyles of plants and animals, which in reproduction move toward receiving the form of plants and animals. They are subject to particular form, which acts on them.

Similarly, the soul has a longing for forms that are appropriate to it, or sensible ones. Correspondingly, the rational soul is drawn to rational forms; that is to say, the individual soul, while called primary reason, is at the beginning like hyle receptive of form; but when it receives the form of universal reason, which is tertiary reason, and itself becomes reason, then it will be ready for activity and will be known as secondary reason.

Now since individual souls have such an attraction, universal souls must also have a universal longing. The same is true of natural matter or the substance that sustains the categories, since this matter also moves to receive the form of the primary qualities, and after that the form of the minerals, of the plants, of sense perceptibles, of rationals, and of intelligibles until it combines with the form of universal reason.

In line with this, consider also the motion of all universals: primary matter must desire to receive primary form and thus acquire goodness, which is existence. The same may be said of anything resulting from matter and form, because what is imperfect with respect to it moves to receive the form of what is perfect; and the higher existence ascends, the fewer its longings and motions become, because of its proximity to perfection.
It is because of this, too, that the higher it ascends and the closer it approaches to the Source of unity, the more its act will be unified and enduring, untrammeled by time, because the more unitary anything is in its own true being, the more unitary its act will be; and since its act is unitary it will create a multiplicity irrespective of time.

35 Unity prevails over all

Even in the multiple and diverse lower realm all opposites seek ultimate union; they concur in something that brings them into conformity. The Disciple now understands that matter is something like a blank book and form like symbols or words that a reader can understand and that awaken a longing to know their Creator. But it is impossible to ascend to the primary Existent, and difficult to attain to Its secondary. Matter and form are portals barred to reason, which is their product. Any seeker who can by self-refinement pass these portals will have achieved the ultimate goal.

DISCIPLE [F 5.53] If the union of matter and form, which exist at the highest level, is because of their longing to be united, what is the reason for the separateness that pervades the lowest level?

MASTER I have often explained to you that the more matter descends and becomes dense, the more it multiplies and diversifies (II, 21; V, 31); and it is this that must bring about multiplicity and diversity of form.

If along with this you will also consider all the different things that exist at the lowest level, you will find that all of them, however diverse, have a tendency to draw together. This drawing together at the lowest level will, then, correspond to union at the highest level; and in every way, everything that is heterogeneous and fragmented whether in higher or lower realms, whether genera, species, differentiae, properties or accidents, as well as all opposites and contraries -- all move toward association, long for coalescence and seek union; since although separated, they are united, and although diverse they concur in something that holds them, joins them together and impels them to aggregate. The basic principle revealed here is that Unity prevails over all, spreads throughout all, and maintains all.
DISCIPLE  [F 5.54] You have now fulfilled all that you promised in connection with universal matter and form, because I am certainly convinced that they exist, what they are, of what sort and why, as well as whatever else could be known about them. I have indeed become an interpreter and observer of them. In fact, I view matter as if it were a blank book or a tablet readied for writing; and I see form as the shapes portrayed and words arranged, from which a reader can gain the goal of understanding and the fullness of wisdom.

And I discover that when my true being encompasses them and recognizes the wonders they contain it is stirred and desires to seek out the painter of this extraordinary design and the creator of this consummate wisdom. Does any way exist, therefore, of ascent to an understanding of that which lies above and beyond matter and form?

MASTER  [F 5.55] It is impossible to ascend to the supreme primary Existent, and certainly difficult to rise to Its secondary. That is why I teach that matter and form are two portals barred to reason and laborious for reason to open and enter, because the substance of reason is subordinate to them and is their product.

Now, the soul of one who refines himself and clarifies his reason to the point of penetrating the portals and entering has truly reached the ultimate goal and becomes spiritual, inspired and filled with delight, since he stands very close to the perfect will. His motion then comes to rest and his joy continues.

36  Motion, the creative Word and Will

All philosophy is embraced in a threefold: matter and form, the creative Word, and Will. What is the place of motion? How is it linked to the creative Word or Will? Why cannot motion be inherent in matter and form?

DISCIPLE  [F 5.56] Please now reveal to me the sources and principles of philosophy.

MASTER  They are three. First is the philosophy of matter and form, which is that part of philosophy which we have explored from the beginning up until now. Second is the philosophy of the creative Word, or Will. Third is the philosophy of the primary Existent, as you were told at the beginning (I,7).
If, therefore, you can acquire these three general philosophies, you will have encompassed and mastered everything accessible to human reason. Following these, nothing will remain for you to investigate because everything is embraced in them and turns upon them.

DISCIPLE What is your teaching on the motion that permeates matter and form, by virtue of which their capacity for activity and reactivity can exist?

MASTER The teaching on motion is included in the instruction on the Word, because motion is a potency that is innate in it. You must understand, therefore, what action and passion are, of what quality and why, since these are included in the philosophy of the Word.

DISCIPLE [F 5.57] What difference is there between motion and the Word?

MASTER It is this: the Word is a potency that permeates spiritual substances, imparting wisdom and vitality to them, while motion is a force diffused through physical substances that confers on them the power to act and react. This is because the Word, or Will, after creating matter and form bound itself to them in the way that the soul is bound to the physical body: it pervaded them unceasingly and penetrated them throughout.

DISCIPLE [F 5.58] What evidence is there that this is to be attributed to Will and not implicit in matter and form?

MASTER The evidence comes from the motion that derives from Will, from its protective shade and from its irradiations. In this particular, motion is to be discovered in physical substances, where it permeates them; but physical substance does not possess this on its own account but rather has been endowed with it from spiritual substances. It could possess such motion from spiritual substances only, inasmuch as physical substance is without that capacity to receive it which spiritual substance enjoys, being handicapped by its remoteness from its Source, as you have so often been told.
Will (= “reasoned purpose”), the creator of existence

Different qualities of will (= “reasoned purpose”) operate in spiritual and physical substances according to the differing depth, nearness and corporeality of the substances. The difference occurs in the matter, not in will itself. In the matter of reason, will creates existence, the universal form that supports all forms eternally. And particular reason creates particular rational form, life and motion of various sorts. All such motions derive from will, as is shown by the fact that the body can control motion by ceasing breathing. Any motion varies in strength according to the differences in the substances that receive it.

Will cannot vary within itself, because it comes from Unity; it is the power of Unity, and was its first differentiation. It differs from matter and form and yet flows into these as the soul flows into body. Will is the creator and matter and form the creation. Taken without its activity, it is identical with the primary Existent; but taken with its activity it will be found to differ.\footnote{The inconsistency in capitalizing “Will” (= “will”) is deliberate. Like reason and soul, it is ambiguous, referring both to a universal elemental potency and to its everyday common occurrence in the world. There is a special problem with this word because of the temptation to read it as a verb instead of a noun. Sometimes it is capitalized just to remove this ambiguity, and sometimes to call attention to its association with the divine. (LL)}

DISCIPLE It cannot be otherwise.

MASTER Similarly, Will cannot be present in lower spiritual substances in the same way that it is in higher ones.

DISCIPLE Indeed it cannot.

MASTER [F 5.59] Consequently there must be different orders of Will in spiritual and in physical substances respecting permeation and impression relative to the differing height and depth, nearness and distance, spirituality and corporeality. What causes the varied activity of Will lies in its recipient matter, not in Will itself, as I have often pointed out (V,32).

In conformity with this, Will must in the universal matter of reason create existence as the universal form that sustains all forms timelessly. Here, then, is an illustration of the divine will’s creation of universal form in the matter of reason: particular will, which is particular reason, creates a particular rational form in the soul; in other words, reason outpours this form upon the soul and imparts it instantly and timelessly. In the same way it creates in the matter of the soul life and essential motion; and in the matter of nature and in the matter subordinate to that it brings about local and other motions.
All these motions, however, derive from will, and so it follows that all substances both spiritual and physical must be actuated by will. Now the fact that will actuates all substances and bodies is evidence that the will of the soul moves body or causes some of its members to remain at rest, as for instance when the breath is held, which is the contrary of causing motion.

And this motion that has been diffused throughout all substances by will varies as to strength and weakness because of the diversity of the substances that receive it and not because of any diversity in will itself, as I have repeatedly stated (V, 32; V, 37).

DISCIPLE      What proof is there that will has no diversity within itself?

MASTER      Because its existence is from Unity and it is in fact the potency of Unity. In addition, it was the first differentiation, from which matter and form arose.

DISCIPLE      According to your teaching, will must be something different from matter and form; and yet its potency flows into matter and is joined to it exactly as the soul is joined to the body.

MASTER      How could Will not be other than matter and form, when it is the creator and they the creation? Moreover, if Will is considered apart from its activity, it is identical with the primary Existent, but if taken together with its activity, it will be found to differ from the primary Existent. Accordingly, they differ from the very beginning of creation, which is the inception of the union of matter and form.

DISCIPLE      But if Will is neither matter nor form, what then it it?
38 The function of Will

Will is a divinely inspired force that creates and combines matter and form, extends from highest to lowest, and moves and orders everything, exactly as does the soul in body.

Will is active like a writer, form is an act like writing, and matter is their substratum, like a writing tablet. Although form permeates matter, will is a high spiritual force that permeates both form and matter. In terms of light, Will will be the power, form the light itself, and matter the atmosphere.

MASTER [F 5.60] Will cannot be defined, but it can be approximated by stating that it is a divinely inspired potency that creates and combines matter and form and is diffused throughout, exactly as is the soul in a living body. It is what activates and disposes all.

DISCIPLE Please explain to me by an unmistakable example just how Will is diffused through substances and how it acts in them.

MASTER [F 5.61] Matter and form may be likened to body, the atmosphere and the soul; and Will that binds them and is diffused through them is like the soul in body, luminosity in the atmosphere, and reason in the soul, for when will permeates the whole matter of reason, that matter becomes knowing and encompasses the form of all things; and when it is diffused throughout the whole matter of the soul, this becomes a living matter, mobile and cognizant of forms in the measure of its potency and its relative placement away from the source of truth and form; and when it permeates the matter of nature and of body it endows this with motion, shape and form.

DISCIPLE According to what you seem to be saying, is there no difference between will and form?
[F 5.62] What greater difference can there be between them than that Will is an actuator comparable to a writer, while form is an effectuation like writing, and matter is their underlying substance like a tablet or papyrus?

DISCIPLE Since form permeates the whole of matter, penetrating and completing its true being, how can I claim in the light of this that Will also permeates and penetrates the whole of matter?

MASTER Since Will is a spiritual potency and indeed far superior to spiritual, do not doubt its ability to be infused into matter and include it together with form. As an example of this, take the penetration of the sun’s energy as evidenced in its power to radiate light and its oneness with atmospheric sunlight. Will, then, will be like the energy, form like the light, and the atmosphere like matter.

**39 The omnipresence and omniactivity of Will**

*Will, which is the potency of the holy Creator, is said to be omnipresent because it penetrates all things and is their author, combiner and preserver. The power by which form preserves matter comes through will from primary Source and pervades all things without motion and without time. In this respect it resembles light, which radiates motionlessly and timelessly. But as the matter substratum descends in the scale of density, its response to will becomes more and more subject to time.*

DISCIPLE You have certainly revealed to me some profound mysteries. Do you believe this is why the holy Creator on high is said to be omnipresent?

MASTER Undoubtedly that is why; because Will, which is Its potency, imbuies and penetrates everything; nothing exists apart from it inasmuch as the existence and constitution of all things depends on it.

DISCIPLE Please explain.
MASTER  Do you not now see that the existence of the true being of all things is from matter and form and the existence of matter and form from Will? It is this that is their author, compounder and preserver. And so even though we may tell ourselves that it is form that preserves matter we are in error, because form takes from Will the power by which it maintains matter. This is evident from the fact that form is an impress of Unity and the power to preserve belongs to Unity, of which Will is the executor; therefore the power of preserving is an attribute of Will.

But Will preserves matter by means of form. This is why form is said to preserve matter, since form mediates between matter and Will. Form therefore acquires from Will and delivers to matter. And since Will proceeds from primary Source, it has infused this into matter and form, so that both Will and matter and form are present in everything, and without them nothing can exist.

DISCIPLE  In view of the fact that will is intrinsically quiescence, how can it penetrate all things and become motion?

MASTER  Such an idea has no place in our present effort, because it is the most difficult area of the science of will. But what you should understand for now about this conception is that [F 5.63] will does pervade all things without motion just as it impels all things without time, because of its great dynamism and unity.

Now since you want this to be made easier for you to understand, just imagine the activity of reason and the soul in everything without motion and without lapse of time; and imagine the instant radiation of light with no motion and no time lapse, even though it is physical and perceptible.

DISCIPLE  But how can will become motion?

MASTER  Surely because of the substance of the matter that is its substratum. What is taught about form is equally true of will: when its matter is dense and remote from the source of unity, it is enfeebled for the instantaneous timeless motionless reception of the activity of will. Thus it is that matter must be moved by will but subject to time.
The importance and scope of the philosophy of Will

The philosophy of Will in all its ramifications requires a separate book, which shall also discuss creation.

DISCIPLE You have now taught me the philosophy of matter and form and of Will in the measure of my ability to learn the former and to the extent you have found me competent to grasp the latter. Now, then, please teach me the philosophy of creation as far as I can understand it and illustrate for me how the sublime, and holy Creator formed a realm of existence composed of matter and form, so that this may serve to raise me to an understanding of what lies beyond matter and form.

MASTER You must not suppose that what we have discussed can possibly suffice as mastery of the science of will, since any discourse on Will must be lengthy inasmuch as it represents the fullness of wisdom in the philosophy of will. [F 5.64a] This [will] is the source of the form of reason, which is fully formed wisdom as the science of acting and being acted upon that prevails throughout all substances. Now, any understanding of what they are, of what quality and why they exist together with other relevant accidents can be educed only through the philosophy of will as the cause of all and the mover of all.

DISCIPLE What, then, do you advise me to investigate in connection with the philosophy of will, since I have now learned about that of matter and form?

MASTER It is best that you devote yourself to an inquiry into the philosophy of will for a considerable time, since the whole of knowledge resides in it. No other branch of knowledge is so necessary for you to focus on as this, because it is lofty, extensive and intricate. Its works are many and its activities varied.

DISCIPLE Well, then, what should be explored in relation to the philosophy of will?
MASTER Once you grant the existence of will, then you require some knowledge of it in order to contemplate its true being, what it is, how far it extends, what its activity is, its distinction from Unity, its union with It, its differentiation from matter and form, the determination of their descriptions, their ways and their actions in substances both spiritual and physical; and in order to identify the activities and works of the divine Wisdom, the limits of its distribution, the evenness of its motions and emphases, and to know the cessation of its motion, the position of its course and the locations of its appearance and disappearance; and in order to determine the quality of its form both before and after it appears and other things that follow in train that we have not yet examined in this discussion.

I have already planned a study of all these points in a work that deals with the philosophy of will under the title *The Source of Plenty* or *The Cause of Being*, which should be read following this. In it you will ascertain the truth about creation, which is what you wanted to know.

41 The nature of creation

Creation is an outpouring of form from the divine will and its imprint on matter timelessly and motionlessly. Sense perception is of form, not matter, as mirror images are form without matter, and this applies equally to genera, species, differentiae, properties and accidents. Diversification comes from degree of remoteness from source and degree of mediation. The soul at the moment of its creation has full knowledge but this becomes obscured by the darkness of substance and must be recovered by an effort of memory.

(The Master continues) I shall now point out some of this, as much as you can sustain and as much as I believe to be useful to you. [F 5.64b] My teaching, then, is that the creation of the world by the supreme Creator on high, which is an outpouring of form from the primary Source or Will and its influx upon matter, is like the outpouring of water from its source and its continuous flow. That, however, is without interruption or cessation, while this is motionless and timeless.
Now the imprint of form on matter when it reaches this from will is like the reflection of a figure in a mirror when cast back from a viewer. Following this analogy, matter receives form from will as a mirror admits a figure from a viewer, although the matter does not receive the true being of that from which it receives form.

In addition, the following can serve as an example: just as sense receives the form but not the matter of what is perceived – for sense does receive the perceived form without its matter – and just as reason receives a thought form without any matter: in just this way anything at all acts on another by means of the form that it impresses on that other.

DISCIPLE According to what you have just said, then, the genera, species, differentiae, properties, accidents and in general all forms sustained in matter are just an impress in matter from the divine Wisdom.

MASTER That is certainly what I have so often taught you.

DISCIPLE But why in that case is this impress so diversified in matter?

MASTER That is because of its remoteness from its source and because its reception may be sometimes mediated and sometimes unmediated (III,6: 34,36,38).

DISCIPLE [F 5.65] Please explain to me why the soul lost these impresses of the divine Wisdom and can regain them only by much zeal for learning and by remembering.157

MASTER You must be aware that the soul was created having full knowledge, and so must contain within itself its own characteristic information. But once the soul has been united with a substance and has commingled with it, it is no longer in a position to receive those imprints because so much darkness of substance has overwhelmed it that its luminosity has died out and its substance has become dense. It has become something like a bright mirror to which some thick matter has been applied, whose brightness is thereby obscured and its substance made dull.

---

157 Cf. Plato’s *anamnesis* in *Meno* #81 and elsewhere.
Now since this is as I have explained, almighty God from His tenuousness formed a substance, namely this universe of ours, and distributed it in accordance with the admirable order in which it exists, and equipped the soul with senses for perception of sense forms and shapes. When the soul grasps these, it gains knowledge through them of rational forms and shapes, and in it they pass from potentiality to actuality. This is why it is taught that perception of secondary substances and accidents takes place through knowledge of primary ones (II,6).

DISCIPLE    Judging from this, it seems sense knowledge activates memory and actuality in the soul.

MASTER     That is certainly so, because the soul in observing sense data resembles a man who is witness to many things, and once he departs from them all that remains with him is a notion in his imagination and memory.\footnote{Cf. Aristotle, \textit{Posterior Analytics}, 419.}

42  The origin of form and of matter

The value of sense data to the soul; the relation of form and matter to the primary Existent; the development of multiplicity; the mediation of will as the grantor of form.

DISCIPLE     [F 5.66] Even so, what advantage does the soul derive from its tie with sense perceptibles?

MASTER     The advantage is that the soul becomes discerning and experienced in them and what lies unmanifest in it is brought forth into actuality as I have explained. What I mean is that it recognizes secondary substances and accidents through knowledge of primary ones (II, 6).

DISCIPLE     Let us return to what we were just discussing, namely that all forms whatsoever that subsist in matter are impresses from the wisdom of the primary Existent. And since we are here speaking of form, what shall we say of matter?
MASTER [F 5.67] The same may be said of matter as of form: that is has been created from the primary Existent, while form is from a property of that Existent, or from unity and wisdom, although the primary Existent is of course not endowed with any property that is extrinsic to it.

Herein lies the distinction between Creator and creation: the Creator is a single existent defined by its own very nature, while the creation is of two essential natures, matter and form, as I explained when I specified why these two exist (V,23).

DISCIPLE Please explain that again here.

MASTER The blessed primary Existent and Its property are wholly one, not separate. But matter and form are separate since they are the initiation of the activity of Unity by reason of following foremost and in immediate succession. Consider this in the light of the multiplicity that befalls form in the measure that substance extends away from the primacy of the Source of unity.

This can be made clear in the following way: the matter of reason is more at one with form and more elemental than that of the soul, and the matter of the soul more than that of nature, until we come to body where the greatest multiplicity and variety are found; and the same is true of the various levels of body, because that of the celestial sphere is more unified and elemental than that of the elements; and of these the higher in more unified and elemental than the lower.

This provides proof that universal matter and form follow Unity in the chain of creation, and that matter receives form from Unity in accordance with the varying receptivity of its true being, since one of them sustains and the other is sustained.

DISCIPLE It is evident from these teachings that matter does not have existence. But creation means the gaining of existence. From this it follows that matter has not been created.
MATTER never existed separate from form even for a twinkling and so is not created nor does it possess existence. It is, however, created simultaneously with form inasmuch as its existence was by reason of form in that it was created along with the form sustained in it with no time gap at all.

DISCIPLE [F 5.68] According to your teaching, since the blessed primary Existent possesses some inherent property by virtue of which It differs from anything else, there must then be some existent deriving from Its true being that possesses an extrinsic property, and this is matter and form. It seems inescapable. But the philosophers are in the habit of referring to matter as potentiality.\(^{159}\)

MATTER They designated matter as potentiality because of its potential for receiving form or being invested with its luminosity. The inescapability you refer to arises because it is under Will, which is above form. Hence there is nothing extraordinary about it.

DISCIPLE Please explain further about matter’s coming from the primary Existent and form from a property.

MATTER Can Will possibly act contrary to what is present in the primary Existent?

DISCIPLE No, it cannot.

MATTER Then it must be that matter is caused by the primary Existent and form by Will, which is to say by the divine Wisdom.

DISCIPLE If matter and form are the products of the primary Existent and its property, why is it taught that form comes to matter and where does it come from?

MATTER [F 5.69] Form comes from above and matter receives it from below since matter is subordinate, having existence under form, while form is sustained upon it.

DISCIPLE What is the proof of that?

\(^{159}\) V,24; De anima 412a 10; 414a 16.
Here is the proof: since the donor of form is above all things, its recipient must therefore be beneath it. Furthermore, since it is itself authentic existence, existence must outflow from it; and the closer such existence is to the Source of being, the brighter its luminosity and the more firmly established in being. This is exhibited in sense perception, since substance is more worthy of existence than accident, and among accidents quantity is more worthy of existence than quality.

DISCIPLE  [F 5.70] Does matter receive form from the primary Existent directly, or with mediation?

MASTER  Most assuredly by the mediation of will. That is why matter is said to be as it were the throne of the One, and Will as the donor of form is seated on it and rests thereon.

Now the proof that Will differs from form is this: form’s requirement of a mover, a measurer, a divider and other things by means of which Will is recognized, which we have already discussed to some extent (V, 36).

43  The path to ultimate union

Creation is like a spoken word whose form and meaning are impressed on the hearing and reason of a listener. With the utterance of a word a matter is given existence that sustains both its manifest and unmanifest form, or meaning. In summary, matter and form alone exist; motion outflows from will, which is a divine potency that permeates all things. But much remains to be learned before the grandeur of universal Cause can be penetrated and deliverance from mortality can be achieved.

DISCIPLE  [F 5.71a] In the course of these discussions you have compared creation to the outflow of water from a spring and the reflection of a shape from a mirror. Is there still some other parallel? (V,41)

MASTER  Creation may be likened to a word that a man speaks, since as he utters the word its form and meaning are impressed on the hearing and understanding of the listener. By this analogy it may be said that the sublime and holy Creator utters the Word and its meaning is impressed on the true being of matter, which retains it; that is to say, the created form is impressed on matter and portrayed in it.
DISCIPLE Please explain this analogy and show how it conforms to the other one.

MASTER Well, sound is like universal matter, since it is a universal matter that sustains all particular sounds such as tones, melodies and harmonies. This form is revealed in the form of a heard word, and may be broken down into particular forms that subsist in individual particular matters. By particular forms I mean the movements and by particular matters the bounds; but the unmanifest form is the meaning of that which the word signifies.

DISCIPLE But what is the counterpart of creation?

MASTER It is speech; because with the utterance of a word used in speech, its matter gains existence and it then sustains both the manifest and the unmanifest form of the word; that is, the meaning that it carries, and also the existence of both.

DISCIPLE Do this example and what it exemplifies concur in some way?

MASTER [F 5.71b] They do indeed concur in that each of them requires its Creator for its emergence and continuance.

DISCIPLE [F 5.72] At last, thanks to everything you have presented, I am convinced that in all created things whatsoever nothing but matter and form exists and I have come to understand universal matter and universal form. It is obvious to me that activity is a potency that emerges from Will, and that Will is an all-pervasive divine faculty that spreads throughout all things just as light spreads through the atmosphere, the soul through the physical body, and reason in turn through the soul. Now, therefore please advise me as to what I should ask from this point on.
MASTER  You must not suppose that a knowledge of matter and form can suffice for everything; take your time and do not proceed in haste. Always take pains to understand the true being of each, whether universal matter or universal form, in separation from the other, and what sort of variety occurs in form, how its unconditioned outflow and permeation of matter takes place and how it can penetrate all substances in orderly sequence. You must be able to distinguish matter from form, form from will, and will from the workings of your reason with sharp discernment.

When you have accomplished this, your mind will be refined, your reason illuminated, and it will enter the realm of universal reason. You will then comprehend the universality of matter and form; and matter with all its forms will be like a book opened before you, while you will become an observer, through your reason, of what it reveals; your mind will take in and understand its representations; whereupon you will anticipate being able to mount to an apprehension of what lies beyond.

DISCIPLE  And what does lie beyond?

MASTER  The Cause by reason of which whatever is exists, knowledge of which is knowledge of the world of divinity, which is the insurpassible whole. All that lies beneath that world is by comparison with it wholly insignificant.

DISCIPLE  What path leads to this inestimable knowledge?

MASTER  It is to be attained in two ways. One is by an understanding of Will as this permeates the totality of matter and form; and the other is by an understanding of Will as this encompasses matter and form. It is the supreme potency and totally unmingled with matter and form.

Now as to how you can rise to the understanding of this potency in view of its nonmingling with matter and form, you can accomplish this by poising your soul when it does commingle with matter and form and raising yourself up gradually through it to the point where you attain to its Source and Fountainhead.

DISCIPLE  What benefit can we expect to achieve from this zeal?

MASTER  Deliverance from mortality, and union with the Source of all life.
DISCIPLE What will help achieve this lofty hope?

MASTER [F 5.74] First, be released from sense involvements, then be mentally immersed in rational perceptions and totally dependent on the Giver of all good. To the degree you can accomplish this, He will look with favor on you and will be bountiful to you, as befits His nature. I have spoken.

POSTSCRIPT TO COMMON TEXT:

Herewith is this fifth book concluded, which deals with universal matter and universal form and with its completion the entire book has been accomplished with God’s assistance and by His mercy.

IT IS FINISHED AVENCEBROL

POSTSCRIPT TO LATIN TRANSLATION:

Now that the book has been written, praise and glory be to Christ, Through whom is finished that which is undertaken in his name, The linguistic mediation of John of Spain translated this, Froth the Arabic, with the assistance of Dominic. *

---

* Reference is to Johannes Hispanus, whose name before conversion from Judaism was Ibn Daud, and to Dominicus Gundissalinus, archdeacon of Segovia. The former is thought to have rendered the Arabic, and the latter to have composed the Latin.
ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Dr. Alfred B. Jacob is a graduate of Exeter College, Oxford, where he made a special study of Spanish mysticism, and of the University of Pennsylvania with a Ph.D. in Romance languages and with special attention to the medieval period. He spent summers in Spain and one winter at the University of Seville. During the Civil War in Spain he was in charge of child feeding in the northeast region for the Friends Service Council of London. He has taught at the University of Pennsylvania and Dartmouth, Haverford and Franklin and Marshall Colleges and published articles in the Hispanic Review. Married in England in 1933, he has a son, the novelist Piers Anthony and a daughter who is publications manager for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends.

At the request of Dr. Marc Edmond Jones Dr. Jacob produced a tentative translation of the Fons Vitae into English in 1954 but the pressures of academic life prevented necessary refinement of it until 1978, when Dr. Jones planned to write an exhaustive commentary to culminate his long philosophical career. At Dr. Jones’s direction vocabulary equivalents were chosen that would avoid misleading preconceptions, particularly of religious nature; but his death in 1980 at the age of 91 prevented completion of the long-anticipated commentary. The translation, however, has been published in the hope that other scholars may rediscover the marked individualism and significant worth of this pivotal thinker, who has much to contribute to the modern age.

160 These equivalents are listed and discussed in the “Preface to the 2005 Revised Translation.” Although they were withdrawn in the 2005 version in favor of the traditional vocabulary (in the interests of readability and helping to situate the Fons Vitae in the context of the classical philosophical tradition), the intention behind them is itself a valuable addition to the body of commentary helping us to understand Gabirol’s thought. – LL

305