

CHAPTER 3
THE SUBJECT OF METAPHYSICS
SPECIFICALLY: SUBSTANCE

1. BOOK VII: SUBSTANCE

Lesson 1

Metaphysics is about substance

1247. First, he explains his thesis. He says that the term being is used in many senses (as has been stated in Book V (885) where he distinguished the different senses in which terms of this kind are used); for (1) in one sense being signifies (a) the **whatness** of a thing and (b) **this particular** thing, i.e., substance, inasmuch as by “the whatness of a thing” is meant the essence of a substance, and by “this particular thing,” an individual substance; and the different senses of substance are reduced to these two, as has been stated in Book V (440:C 898). And in another sense (2) it signifies quality or quantity or any one of the **other categories**.

And since being is used in many senses, it is evident that being in the primary sense is the whatness of a thing, i.e., the being which signifies **substance**.

1248. Second, he proves his thesis by using the following **argument**: in every class of things that which exists of itself and is a being in an unqualified sense is prior to that which exists by reason of something else and is a being in a qualified sense. But substance is a **being in an unqualified sense and exists of itself**, whereas all classes of beings other than substance are beings in a qualified sense and exist by reason of substance. Therefore substance is the primary kind of being.

1249. He makes the minor premise clear in two ways. He does this, first, by considering the way in which we speak or make predications. He says that it is evident from this that substance is the primary kind of being, because when we state of what sort a thing is we say that it is either good or evil; for this signifies quality, which differs from substance and quantity. Now three cubits long signifies quantity and man signifies substance. Therefore when we state of what sort a thing is, we do not say that it is three cubits long or a man. And when we state what a thing is, we do not say that it is white or hot, which signify quality, or three cubits long, which signifies quantity, but we say that it is a man or a god, which signifies substance.

1250. From this it is clear that terms signifying substance express what a thing is in an unqualified sense, whereas those signifying quality do not express what a thing is in an unqualified sense, but what sort of thing it is. The same is true of quantity and the other genera.

1251. From this it is clear that **substance** itself is said to be a **being of itself**, because terms which simply signify substance designate what this thing is.

But other classes of things are said to be beings, not because they have a quiddity of themselves (as though they were beings of themselves, since they do not express what a thing is in an unqualified sense), but because “they belong to such a being,” i.e., because they have some connection with substance, which is a being of itself. For they do not signify quiddity, since some of them are clearly qualities of such a being, i.e., of substance, other quantities, other affections, or something of the sort signified by the other genera.

1252. Second he proves the same point by means of an **example**. The other kinds of beings are beings only inasmuch as they are related to substance. Therefore, since other beings when signified in the abstract do not designate any connection with substance, the question can arise whether they are beings or non-beings, for example, whether to walk, to be healthy, and to sit, and any one of these things which are signified in the abstract, is a being or a non-being. And it is similar in the case of other things such as these, which are signified in the abstract, whether they designate some activity, as the foregoing do, or whether they do not, as is the case with whiteness and blackness.

1253. Now **accidents signified in the abstract** seem to be non-beings, because no one of them is fitted by nature to exist of itself. In fact the being of each of them consists in their existing in something else, and no one of them is capable of existing apart from substance. Therefore when they are signified in the abstract as though they were beings of themselves and separate from substance, they seem to be **non-beings**. The reason is that words do not signify things directly according to the mode of being which they have in reality, but indirectly according to the mode in which we understand them; for concepts are the likenesses of things, and words the likenesses of concepts, as is stated in Book I of the *Peri hermenias*.

1254. Moreover, even though the mode of being which accidents have is not one whereby they may exist of themselves but only in something else, still the intellect can understand them as though they existed of themselves; for it is capable by nature of separating things which are united in reality. Hence abstract names of accidents signify beings which inhere in something else, although they do not signify them as inhering. And non-beings would be signified by names of this kind, granted that they would not inhere in something else.

1255. Further, since these accidents signified in the abstract appear to be non-beings, it seems rather to be the concrete names of accidents that signify beings. And “if

anything is a being,” it seems rather to be “the thing that walks and sits and is healthy,” because some subject is determined by them by reason of the very meaning of the term, inasmuch as they designate something connected with a subject. Now this subject is substance. Therefore every term of this kind which signifies an accident in the concrete “appears in a definite category,” i.e., it seems to involve the category of substance, not in such a way that the category of substance is a part of the meaning of such terms (for white in the categorical sense indicates quality alone), but so that terms of this sort signify accidents as inhering in a substance. And we do not use the terms “good or sitting without this,” i.e., without substance; for an accident signifies something connected with substance.

1256. Again, since accidents do not seem to be beings insofar as they are signified in themselves, but only insofar as they are signified in connection with substance, evidently it is by reason of this that each of the other beings is a being. And from this it also appears that substance is “the first kind of being and being in an unqualified sense and not being of a special sort,” i.e., with some qualification, as is the case with accidents; for to be white is not to be in an unqualified sense but with some qualification. This is clear from the fact that when a thing begins to be white we do not say that it begins to be in an unqualified sense, but that it begins to be white. For when Socrates begins to be a man, he is said to begin to be in an unqualified sense. Hence it is obvious that being a man signifies being in an unqualified sense, but that being white signifies being with some qualification.

1257. Here he shows in what respect substance is said to be first. He says that, since the term first is used in several senses, as has been explained in Book V (936), then *substance* is the **first of all beings** in three respects: in the order of (1) knowing, in (2) definition, and in (3) time.

(3) He proves that it is first in **time** by this argument: none of the other categories is capable of existing apart from substance, but substance alone is capable of existing apart from the others; for no accident is found without a substance, but some substance is found without an accident. Thus it is clear that an accident does not exist whenever a substance does, but the reverse is true; and for this reason substance is prior in time.

1258. (2) It is also evident that it is first in **definition**, because in the definition of any accident it is necessary to include the definition of substance; for just as nose is given in the definition of snub, so too the proper subject of any accident is given in the definition of that accident. Hence just as animal is prior to man in definition, because the definition of animal is given in that of man, in a similar fashion substance is prior to accidents in definition.

1259. (1) It is evident too that substance is first in the order of **knowing**, for that is first in the order of knowing which is better known and explains a thing better. Now

each thing is better known when its substance is known rather than when its quality or quantity is known; for we think we know each thing best when we know what man is or what fire is, rather than when we know of what sort it is or how much it is or where it is or when we know it according to any of the other categories. For this reason too we think that we know each of the things contained in the categories of accidents when we know what each is; for example, when we know what being this sort of thing is, we know quality; and when we know what being how much is, we know quantity. For just as the other categories have being only insofar as they inhere in a substance, in a similar way they can be known only insofar as they share to some extent in the mode according to which substance is known, and this is to know the whatness of a thing.

Lesson 2

Different meanings of substance

1270. Having shown that the chief aim of this science is to study substance, he now begins to establish the truth about substance. This part is divided into two members. In the first (1270) he explains the method and order to be followed in treating of substance. In the second (1306), he goes ahead with his treatment of substance (“And first let us make”).

He explains the method and order to be followed in treating of substance by distinguishing its different senses; and by explaining which of these senses must be dealt with primarily and principally, which of them must be omitted, and which must be considered to be prior or subsequent. Hence the first part is divided into three members, according to the divisions and subdivisions of substance which he gives. This second part (1276) begins where he says, “Now in one sense.” The third (1297) begins where he says, “Now some.”

Accordingly he says, first, that the term substance is used at least of four things, if not “of more,” i.e., in more senses. For there are several senses in which some speak of substance, as is clear in the case of those who said that the limits of bodies are substances, which sense he dismisses here.

(1) Now the first of these senses is that in which a thing’s **essence**, i.e., its quiddity, essential structure, or nature, is called its substance.

1271. (2) The second sense is that in which “the universal” is called the substance of a thing, according to the opinion of those who maintain that the Ideas are separate Forms, which are the universals predicated of particular things and the substances of these particular things.

1272. (3) The third sense is that in which “the first genus seems to be the substance of each thing”; and in this sense they claim that unity and being are the substances of all things and their first genera.

1273. (4) The fourth sense is that in which “the **subject**,” i.e., a **particular** substance, is called a substance. Now a subject means that of which other things are predicated, either as superiors are predicated of inferiors, for example, genera, species and differences; or as common and proper accidents are predicated of a subject, for example, as man, animal, rational, capable of laughter and white are predicated of Socrates. However, a subject is not itself predicated of anything else, and this must be understood essentially. For nothing prevents Socrates from being predicated accidentally of this white thing or of animal or of man, because Socrates is the thing of which white or animal or man is an accident. For it is evident that the subject which is spoken of here is what is called first substance in the *Categories*, for the definition of subject given here and that of first substance given there are the same.

1274. Hence he concludes that it is necessary to establish the truth “about this,” i.e., about this subject or **first substance**, because such a subject seems in the truest sense to be substance. Therefore in the *Categories* it is said that such substance is said to be substance properly, principally and chiefly. For substances of this kind are by their very nature the subjects of all other things, namely, of species, genera and accidents; whereas **second substance**, i.e., genera and species, are the subjects of accidents alone. And they also have this nature only by reason of these first substances; for man is white inasmuch as this man is white.

1275. Hence it is evident that the division of substance given here is almost the same as that given in the *Categories*, for by subject here is understood first substance. And what he called the genus and the universal, which seem to pertain to genus and species, are contained under second substances.

However, the **essence**, which is given here, is omitted in that work, because it belongs in the predicamental order only as a principle; for it is neither a (~) genus nor a (~) species nor (~) an individual thing, but is (+) the formal principle of all these things.

3. Various texts

De potentia q.9, a.1

Substance may be taken in two ways. (1) In one sense it is the ultimate subject which is not predicated of another, and this is the **individual** in the genus of substance; (2) in another sense it is the form or **nature** of a subject.

The reason for this distinction is that several subjects may have a common nature; thus several men have in common the nature of man. Hence the need of distinguishing that which is one from that which is multiple: for the common nature is signified by the definition which indicates what a thing is: so that this common nature is called the essence or quiddity. Wherefore whatsoever a thing contains pertaining to the common nature is included in the signification of the essence, whereas this cannot be said of all that is contained in the individual substance.

For if whatsoever is in the individual substance were to belong to the common nature, there would be no possible distinction between individual substances of the same nature. Now that which is in the individual substance besides the common nature is individual matter which is the principle of individuation and consequently individual accidents which determine this same matter. Accordingly, the essence is compared to the individual substance as a formal part thereof, for instance, human nature in Socrates.

Lesson 5

Distinction between abstract and concrete essence

1378. In support of the statements which he has made it must also be noted that the **whatness** of a thing is what its definition signifies. Hence when a definition is predicated of the thing defined, the whatness of that thing must also be predicated of it. Therefore, (~) **humanity**, which is not predicated of man, is not the whatness of man, but (+) **mortal rational animal** is; for the word humanity does not answer the question, “What is man?” But mortal rational animal does.

Yet humanity is taken as the **formal principle** of the essence, just as animality is taken as (+) the principle of the genus and not as (~) the genus, and as rationality is taken as the (+) principle of the difference and not as (~) the difference.

1379. Now to this extent **humanity** is not absolutely the same as man, because it implies only the essential principles of man and excludes all accidents. For humanity is that by which man is man. But none of the accidents of a man is that whereby he is a man. Hence all accidents of man are excluded from the meaning of humanity.

Now it is the particular thing itself, namely, a **man**, which contains the essential principles and is that in which accidents can inhere. Hence although a man’s accidents are not contained in his intelligible expression, still man does not signify something apart from his accidents. Therefore man signifies as a **whole** and humanity as a **part**.

1380. Moreover, if there is some thing in which no accident is present, then this thing the abstract must differ in no way from the concrete. This is most evident in the case of God. [N.B.]

Hence in things composed of matter and form, the essence is not quite the same as the subject, and consequently it is not predicated of the subject: for we do not say that Socrates is his human nature.

De potentia q.7, a.3, ad 4 (Cf. *Commentary on the Sentences*, I, d.8, q.4, a.2, ad 2; *Contra Gentiles* I, 25, 10)

According to Avicenna (Metaph. III, 8), substance is not rightly defined as (~) a self-subsistent being; for being cannot be the genus of a thing, as the Philosopher says (Metaph. II, 3), because nothing can be added to being that has not a share of being, and a difference should not be a part of the genus.

If, however, *substance* can be defined notwithstanding that it is the most universal of genera, its definition will be a thing whose quiddity is competent to **have** being not in a subject. Hence the definition of substance cannot be applied to God, whose quiddity is not different from His being. Wherefore God is not contained in the genus of substance, but is above all substance.

S.T. I, q.3, a.5, ad 1

The name substance signifies not only what is **being of itself** — for being cannot of itself be a genus — but it also signifies an **essence** to which it belongs in this way, namely, of itself, which being (i.e., existence) however is not its essence.

Substance, Quiddity, Essence, Suppositum, and Subsistence

C.G. I, 21, 4

Forms that are not predicated of subsisting things, whether these be considered universally or each is taken singly, are forms that do not subsist through themselves as singulars individuated in themselves. We do not say that Socrates, or man, or animal is whiteness, because whiteness does not subsist as a singular through itself but is individuated through its subsisting subjects. In the same way, also, natural forms do not subsist as singulars through themselves but are individuated in their proper matters. This is why we do not say that this fire, or fire, is its own form. The very essences or quiddities of genera and species are **individuated** through the **designated matter** of this or that individual, even though the quiddity of the genus or the species should include common form and matter. That is why we do not say that Socrates or man is humanity.

Quodlibetalia IX, q.2, a.2

Of the names that signify individuality, some are found in all classes of being such as the names singular, particular, and individual. Thus a designated whiteness is singular, particular, and individual... Other names signify the individual only in the genus of **substance**, such as the name *hypostasis* which signifies an individual substance of a rational nature, or the name *supposit*, or a “*thing of nature*,” none of which can be predicated of the designated whiteness even though the whiteness is individual.

The reason for this is that those names signify something subsistent but accidents do not subsist. Likewise with regard to the parts of substances, although they are of the nature of subsistent things, they do not subsist of themselves but are in something else. Therefore, the above-mentioned names are not predicated of the **parts** as substances, for we do not say that this hand is a *hypostasis*, a *person*, or *supposit*, or a “*thing of nature*” even though one can say that it is something individual, particular, or singular, names that can be applied to accidents.

The previous terms and *person*

Summa Theologiae, I, q. 29, art. 1

We proceed thus to the First Article:

Objection 1. It would seem that the definition of person given by Boethius is insufficient—that is, a person is an individual substance of a rational nature. For nothing singular can be subject to definition. But person signifies something singular. Therefore person is improperly defined.

Obj. 2. Further, substance, as placed above in the definition of person, is either first substance or second substance. If it is the former, the word individual is superfluous, because first substance is individual substance; if it stands for second substance, the added word individual is false, for there is a contradiction in terms, since second substances are called genera or species. Therefore this definition is incorrect.

Obj. 3. Further, a term of intention must not be included in the definition of a thing. For to define a man as a species of animal would not be a correct definition, since man is the name of a thing, and species is a name of an intention. Therefore, since person is the name of a thing (for it signifies a substance of a rational nature), the word individual which is an intentional name comes improperly into the definition.

Obj. 4. Further, Nature is the principle of motion and rest, in those things in which it is essentially, and not accidentally, as Aristotle

says. But person is found in immovable things, as in God, and in the angels. Therefore the Word *nature* ought not to enter into the definition of person, but the word should rather be essence.

Obj. 5. Further, the separated soul is an individual substance of a rational nature; but it is not a person. Therefore person is not properly defined as above.

I answer that, although universal and particular exist in every genus, nevertheless, in a certain special way the **individual** belongs to the genus of *substance*. For substance is individuated through itself, whereas the accidents are individuated by the subject, which is the substance. For this particular whiteness is called this because it exists in this particular subject. And so it is reasonable that the individuals of the genus substance should have a special name of their own; for they are called *hypostases*, or first substances.

Further still, in a more special and perfect way, the particular and the individual are found in **rational** substances, which have dominion over their own actions, and which are not only made to act, as are others, but act of themselves; for actions belong to singulars. Therefore, individuals of a rational nature even have a special name among other substances; and this name is *person*.

Thus the term individual substance is placed in the definition of person, as signifying the singular in the genus of substance; and the term rational nature is added, as signifying the singular in the class of rational substances.

Reply Obj. 1. Although this or that singular may not be definable, yet what belongs to the general idea of singular can be defined; and so the Philosopher gives a definition of first substance. This is also the way in which Boethius defines person.

Reply Obj. 2. In the opinion of some, the term substance in the definition of person stands for first substance, which is the hypostasis; nor is the term individual superfluously added, inasmuch as by the name of hypostasis or first substance the idea of universality and of part is excluded. For we do not say that man-in-general is an hypostasis, nor that the hand is, since it is only a part. But when individual is added, the idea of assumptibility is excluded from person; for the human nature in Christ is not a person, since it is assumed by a greater—that is, by the Word of God. It is, however, better to say that substance is here taken in a general sense, as divided into first and second, and that when individual is added, it is restricted to first substance.

Reply Obj. 3. Since substantial differences are unknown to us, or at least unnamed by us, it is sometimes necessary to use accidental differences in their place; as, for example, we may say that fire is a simple, hot, and dry body: for proper accidents are the effects of substantial forms, and make them known. Likewise, terms expressive of intention can be used in defining realities if used to signify things which are unnamed. And so the term individual is placed in the definition of person to signify the mode of subsistence which belongs to particular substances.

Reply Obj. 4. According to the Philosopher, the term *nature* was first used to signify the generation of living things, which is called nativity. And because this kind of generation comes from an intrinsic principle, this term is extended to signify the intrinsic principle of any kind of movement. In this sense he defines nature. And since this kind of principle is either formal or material, both matter and form are commonly called nature. And as the essence of anything is completed by the form, for this reason the essence of anything, signified by the definition, is commonly called nature. And here nature is taken in that sense. Hence Boethius says that nature is the specific difference giving its form to each thing; for the specific difference completes the definition, and is derived from the proper form of a thing. So in the definition of person, which means the singular in a determined genus, it was more correct for Boethius to use the term nature than essence, because the latter is taken from being, which is most common.

Reply Obj. 5. The soul is a part of the human species; and so, although it may exist in a separate state, yet since it retains its capacity for union, it cannot be called an individual substance, which is the hypostasis or first substance, as neither can the hand, nor any other part of man. Hence neither the definition nor the name of person belongs to it.

Summa Theologiae, I, a. 29, art. 2.

We proceed thus to the Second Article:

Objection 1. It would seem that person is the same as hypostasis, subsistence, and essence. For Boethius says that the Greeks called the individual substance of a rational nature by the name hypostasis.” But this with us signifies person. Therefore person is altogether the same as hypostasis.

Obj. 2. Further, as we say there are three persons in God, so we say there are three subsistences in God; which implies that person and subsistence have the same meaning. Therefore person and subsistence mean the same.

Obj. 3. Further, Boethius says that οὐσία which means essence, signifies a being composed of matter and form. Now, that which is composed of matter and form is the individual substance and is called hypostasis and person. Therefore all the aforesaid names seem to have the same meaning.

Obj. 4. On the contrary, Boethius says that genera and species only subsist; whereas individuals not only subsist, but also substand. But subsistences are so called from subsisting, as substance or hypostasis is so called from substanding. Therefore, since genera and species are not hypostases or persons, these are not the same as subsistences.

Obj. 5. Further, Boethius says that matter is called hypostasis, and form is called οὐσιώσις – that is, subsistence. But neither form nor matter can be called person. Therefore person differs from the others.

I answer. According to the Philosopher, substance is twofold. (1) In one sense, it means the *quiddity* of a thing, signified by the definition, and thus we say that the definition signifies the substance of a thing; in which sense substance is called by the Greeks *ousia*, which we may call essence. (2) In another sense, substance means a subject or *suppositum*, which subsists in the genus of substance. To this, taken in a general sense, can be applied a name expressive of an intention; and thus it is called the *suppositum*.

It is also called by three names signifying a reality —that is, (1) a *thing of nature*, (2) *subsistent being*, and (3) *hypostasis*, according to a threefold consideration of the substance thus named.

For, (2) as it exists in itself and not in another, it is called *subsistent being*, for we say that those things subsist which exist in themselves and not in another. (1) As it underlies some common nature, it is called a *thing of nature*... (3) As it underlies the accidents, it is called *hypostasis* or *substance*.

What these three names signify in common in the whole genus of substances, this name *person* signifies in the genus of rational substances.

Reply Obj. 1. Among the Greeks, the term hypostasis, taken in the strict interpretation of the term, signifies any individual of the genus substance; but in the usual way of speaking, it means the individual of a rational nature, by reason of the excellence of that nature.

Reply Obj. 2. As we speak in the plural of three persons in God, and three subsistences, so the Greeks say three hypostases. But because the word substance, which, properly speaking, corresponds in meaning to hypostasis, is used among us in an equivocal sense (since it sometimes means the essence, and sometimes the hypostasis), in order to avoid any occasion of error, it was thought preferable to use subsistence for hypostasis, rather than substance.

Reply Obj. 3. Strictly speaking, the essence is what is expressed by the definition. Now, the definition comprises the principles of the species, but not the individual principles. Hence in things composed of matter and form, the essence signifies not only the form, nor only the matter, but what is composed of matter and the common form, as the principles of the species. But what is composed of this matter and this form has the nature of hypostasis and person. For soul, flesh, and bone belong to the nature of this man. Therefore hypostasis and person add the individual principles to the notion of essence; nor are these identified with the essence in things composed of matter and form, as we said above when considering the divine simplicity.

Reply Obj. 4. Boethius says that genera and species subsist, inasmuch as it belongs to some individual things to subsist; for which the reason is that they belong to genera and species comprised in the predicament of substance, and not because species and genera themselves subsist, except in the opinion of Plato, who asserted that the species of things subsisted separately from singular things. To stand, however, belongs to the same individual things in relation to accidents, which are outside the essence of genera and species.

Reply Obj. 5. The individual composed of matter and form stands in relation to accident from the very nature of matter. Hence Boethius says: A simple form cannot be a subject. Its self-subsistence, however, is derived from the nature of its form, which does not enter an already subsisting thing, but gives actual existence to the matter, and so enables the individual to subsist. On this account, therefore, he ascribes hypostasis to matter, and οὐσιώσις or subsistence, to the form, because the matter is the principle of standing, and the form is the principle of subsisting.

S.T., I, q.29, a.3

Person signifies what is most perfect in all nature — that is, a subsistent individual of a rational nature. Hence, since everything that is perfect must be attributed to God, inasmuch as His essence contains every perfection, this name person is fittingly applied to God; not, however, as it is applied to creatures, but in a more excellent way.

4. BOOK V: DEFINITIONS

Lesson 5: Nature

808. Here he gives the different meanings of the term nature. And even though an investigation of the term nature appears not to belong to first philosophy but rather to the philosophy of nature, he nevertheless gives the different meanings of this term here, because according to one of its common meanings nature is predicated of every substance, as he will make clear. Hence it falls under the consideration of first philosophy just as universal substance does.

In regard to the first he does two things. First (808), he distinguishes the different senses in which the term nature is used. Second (824), he reduces all of these to one primary notion (“Hence, from what”).

In regard to the first he does two things. First, he gives five principal senses in which the term, nature is used. Second (821), he gives two additional senses connected with the last two of these (“Again, nature”).

(1) He accordingly says, first, that in one sense nature means

the **process of generation** of things that are generated, or, according to another text which states this in a better way, “of things that are born.” For not everything that is generated can be said to be born but only living things, for example, plants and animals and their parts. The generation of non-living things cannot be called nature, properly speaking, according to the common use of the term, but only the generation of living things inasmuch as nature may mean the nativity or birth of a thing... Yet even from this text it can be understood that the term nature means the generation of living things by a certain lengthening or extension of usage.

809. (2) Again, from the fact that nature was first used to designate the birth of a thing there followed a second use of the term, so that nature came to mean the **principle of generation** from which a thing comes to be, or that from which as from an intrinsic principle something born is first generated.

810. (3) And as a result of the likeness between birth and other kinds of motion the meaning of the term nature has been extended farther, so that in a third sense it means the **source** from which **motion** begins in any being **according to its nature**, provided that it is present in it insofar as it is such a being and not accidentally. For example, the principle of health, which is the medical art, is not present in a physician who is ill insofar as he is ill but insofar as he is a physician. And he is not healed insofar as he is a physician but insofar as he is ill; and thus the source of motion is not in him insofar as he is moved. This is the definition of nature given in Book II of the *Physics*...

815. And from this it is evident that anything that is born is always connected with the thing from which it is born. Hence nature never means an extrinsic principle, but in every sense in which it is used it is taken to mean an intrinsic principle.

816. (4) And from this third meaning of nature there follows a fourth. For if the source of motion in natural bodies is called their nature, and it seemed to some that the principle of motion in natural bodies is **matter**, it was for this reason that matter came to be called nature, which is taken as a principle of a thing both as to its being and as to its becoming. And it is also considered to be without any form, and is not moved by itself but by something else. He accordingly says that nature is spoken of as that primary thing of which any being is composed or from which it comes to be.

817. He says this because matter is a principle both of being and of becoming. Hence he says that “it is without order,” i.e., form; and for this reason another text says “when it is unformed”; for in the case of some things their order (or arrangement) is regarded as their form, as in the case of an army or of a city. And for this reason he says that it is “immutable by its own power,” i.e., it cannot be moved by its own power but by that of a higher agent. For matter does not move itself to acquire a form but is moved by a higher and extrinsic agent. For instance, we might say that “bronze is the nature of a statue or of bronze vessels” or “wood of wooden,” as if such vessels were natural bodies. The same is true of everything else that is composed of or comes to be from matter; for each comes to be from its matter though this is

preserved. But in the process of generation the dispositions of a form are not preserved; for when one form is introduced another is cast out. And for this reason it seemed to some thinkers that forms are **accidents** and that matter alone is substance and nature, as he points out in the *Physics*, Book II

818. They held this view because they considered the matter and form of natural bodies in the same way as they did the matter and form of things made by art, in which forms are merely accidents and matter alone is substance. It was in this sense that the philosophers of nature said that the elements are the matter of things which come to be by nature, i.e., water, air, or fire, or earth, which no philosopher has held to be the element of natural beings all by itself, although some of those who were not philosophers of nature did hold this, as was stated in Book I (134). And some philosophers, such as Parmenides, held that some of these are the elements and natures of things; others, such as Empedocles, held that all four are the elements of things; and still others, such as Heraclitus, held that something different is the element of things, for he claimed that vapor plays this role.

819. (5) Now because motion is caused in natural bodies by the form rather than by the matter, he therefore adds a fifth sense in which the term nature is used: that in which nature means the **form** of a thing. Hence in another sense nature means “the substance of things,” i.e., the form of things, which are by nature. It was in this sense that some said that the nature of things is the composition of mixed bodies, as Empedocles said that there is nothing absolute in the world, but that only the alteration or loosening (or mixing, according to another text) of what has been mixed is called nature by men. For they said that things composed of different mixtures have different natures.

820. Now they were led to hold that form is nature by this process of reasoning: whatever things exist or come to be by nature are not said to have a nature, even though the matter from which they are naturally disposed to be or to come to be is already present, unless they have a proper species and a form through which they acquire their species. Now the term species seems to be given in place of substantial form and the term form in place of figure, which is a natural result of the species and a sign of it. Hence, if form is nature, a thing cannot be said to have a nature unless it has a form. Therefore, that which is composed of matter and form “is said to be by nature,” i.e., according to nature, as animals and the parts of animals, such as flesh and bones and the like.

821. Then he gives two meanings of nature which are connected with the last two preceding ones, and the first of these is added to the fourth sense of nature, in which it means the matter of a thing. And he says that not every kind of matter is said to be the nature of a thing but only **first matter**. This can be understood in two senses: either with reference to something generic, or with reference to something that is first absolutely or without qualification. For example, the first matter generically of artificial things produced from bronze is bronze; but their first matter without qualification is water; for all things which are liquefied by heat and solidified by cold have the character of water, as he says in Book IV of the *Meteors*.

822. He links up the second of these additional meanings with the fifth sense of nature mentioned above, according to which nature means form. And in this sense not only the **form of a part** (*forma partis*) is called nature but the species is the **form of the whole** (*forma totius*). For example, we might say that the nature of man is not only a soul but humanity and the substance signified by the definition. For it is from this point of view that Boethius says that the nature of a thing is the specific difference which informs each thing, because the specific difference is the principle that completes a thing's substance and gives it its species. And just as form or matter is called nature because it is a principle of generation, which is the meaning of nature according to the original use of the term, in a similar way the **species** or substance of a thing is called its nature because it is the end of the process of generation. For the process of generation terminates in the species of the thing generated, which is a result of the union of matter and form.

823. And because of this every substance is called nature according to a kind of metaphorical and extended use of the term; for the nature which we spoke of as the terminus of generation is a substance. Thus every substance is similar to what we call nature. Boethius also gives this meaning of the term. Moreover, it is because of this meaning that the term nature is distinguished from other common terms. For it is common in this way just as substance also is.

824. Then he reduces all of the foregoing senses of the term nature to one common notion. But it must be noted that the reduction of the other senses to one primary sense can happen

in two ways: in one way, with reference to the order which things have; and in another way, with reference to the order which is observed in giving names to things. For names are given to things according as we understand them, because names are signs of what we understand; and sometimes we understand prior things from subsequent ones. Hence something that is prior for us receives a name which subsequently fits the object of that name. And this is what happens in the present case; for since the forms and powers of things are known from their activities, the process of generation or birth of a thing is the first to receive the name of nature and the last is the form.

825. But with reference to the order which things have in reality the concept of nature primarily fits the **form**, because, as has been said (808), nothing is said to have a nature unless it has a form.

826. Hence from what has been said it is evident that "in its primary and proper sense nature is the substance," i.e., the form, of those things which have within themselves as such the source of their motion. For **matter** is called nature because it is receptive of form; and processes of generation get the name of nature because they are motions proceeding from a form and terminating in further forms. And this, namely, the form, is the principle of motion in those things which are by nature, either potentially or actually. For a form is not always the cause of actual motion but sometimes only of potential motion, as when a natural motion is prevented by an external obstacle, or even when a natural action is prevented by a defect in the matter.

Summary

Quiddity = essence (part, excludes accidents), also = "form", "nature" in wide sense, οὐσία

Individual substance: —for all things (individuated by designated quantity):

—“thing of nature” (sharing a common nature)

—supposit (*ST I, 2, a.1*)

—hypostasis, substance (under accidents *ST I, 29, 2*)

—substistent being (in self, not in another)

—person - rational (= hypostasis *Quodlibetales IX q.2, a.2*)