

UNITY *PER SE* (*Metaphysics* VII, qq. 16, 20; VIII, q. 4)

Metaphysics VII, q. 16

The basic question

Does form = essence?

The question is raised because Aristotle on many occasions identifies form with essence. Scotus gives some on the initial objections (nn. 1-13)

The basic answer

No. Being material is part of the essence of material substances; and this obviously comes from matter, not form.

Structure of the question

nn. 1-13: texts from Aristotle to show that form = essence

nn. 14-16: *sed contra*

nn. 17-19: the view of Averroes: form = essence¹

nn. 20-6: texts from Aristotle against this view²

nn. 27-34: arguments against this view

nn. 35-40: Scotus's view: essence includes form and matter

nn. 41-9: replies to the initial objections, showing how to read Aristotle consistently with Scotus's view.

The key idea

n. 35: we need to distinguish matter 'considered in general' (i.e. as a common nature or part of one) and matter 'considered in particular'. The former is part of the quiddity; the latter is part of the particular substance. The ontological structure of the quiddity and the ontological structure of the particular track each other, without and with haecceities, respectively

n. 27: matter 'not of itself a this'

n. 29: 'matter considered universally and form considered universally are constitutive of the composite considered universally'

n. 36: the 'simul totum' is the composite; usually we use the phrase to refer to the particular, but we can use it too to refer to the universal.

¹ The second line of n. 18 should be punctuated as follows: 'all [things] made by chance and art have matter, and that is that'

² As a point of grammar, n. 21, l. 3 near the end should read 'Unless matter were to pertain to the quiddity'.

Difficult paragraphs

n. 38: the simul totum as such is a particular. There seems to be a sense in which particulars don't have quiddities, but they 'are quidditative'. ('What lies beyond the specific quiddity' must be the particular.)

n. 39 explains: only what is common has a quiddity primarily; the particular has it *per se* but not primarily (recall Avicenna's horseness).

Metaphysics VII, q. 20

The context

In general, as at the heading of the question: can a substance have other substances as constituents, and thus, in particular, can organs be substances?

More specifically: we deny the apparently Aristotelian view that there can only be one substantial form in a given substance. For example, in an animal there might be a bodily form, responsible for the structure of the body, and a sensory soul, responsible for fact that the body is alive. So the animal has a body – a composite of matter and a substantial form – as a part; and the body thus described will be a substance. Once the principle is admitted, we can ask about other possible substance-parts too.

Key general argument: it seems that the body survives the death of the animal. In particular: 'parts of animals can be separated without generation' (n. 11)

The answer and a problem to be solved

Scotus says 'yes'. If so, then there is a problem (= n. 1): how to secure the unity of the top-most substance (the one with others as parts)

Structure of the question

nn. 1-5: objections

nn. 6-10: *sed contra*

nn. 11-18: Scotus's opinion (see n. 38)

nn. 19-24: objections

nn. 25-30: arguments in favour of the view that there can be only one substantial form in a substance

nn. 31-7: objections

n. 38: Scotus accepts the first opinion

nn. 39-46: replies to the initial arguments

nn. 47-53: replies to the objections to Scotus's opinion (nn. 19-24)

n. 54: reply to nn. 31-7 (text left blank)

Central arguments pro Scotus's view

Parts can survive the demise of the whole: nn. 11, 13, 15, 17

Single form cannot explain structural complexity of body: n. 31

Central arguments contra

Unity: nn. 1, 19-21

Solution

n. 51 'There's a form of the whole actuating all the parts commonly' – see *Metaphysics* VIII, q. 4

Difficult bits

n. 42: at issue is whether the limits of a body are indivisibles or negations

n. 48: the 'elements' here are the organs, and the question is embryonic development

***Metaphysics* VIII, q. 4**

Solution to VII, q. 20

n. 41: 'The entity of the compound is some third entity other than the entity of the matter and form, and it is caused by these two'.

Structure of the question

nn. 1-4: there are no *per se* wholes

n. 5: *sed contra*

nn. 6-7: opinion of others:

n. 6: unity of matter and form apt to make something *per se* one.

n. 7: it's the potentiality/act unity that does the work. Ac. to Scotus, this means that unity of substance is the result of its being in objective potency prior to being produced.

nn. 8-9: objections to this³

nn. 10-24: Scotus's view

nn. 10-13: matter and form primitively make a *per se* unity.

nn. 14-16: two objections

³ The first sentence of n. 8 should read: 'But this way would imply that any being is truly simple.'

- nn. 14-15: first objection: matter and form could exist without making such a unity
- n. 16: second objection
- nn. 17-53: reply to the first objection (= n. 15).
 - nn. 17-23: possible replies to the objection. The most significant is n. 17: posit an addition form; but this, n. 18, leads to infinite regress.
 - nn. 25-56: further discussion of the separability worry (nn. 14-15)
 - nn. 25-32: there must be a third thing.
 - nn. 32-3: ‘because matter and form are united, they cause; therefore there is something in a composite [over and above matter and form]’
 - n. 33: a relation
 - nn. 34-7: and an absolute
 - nn. 38-40: how the relation arises
 - n. 41: the main position stated
 - nn. 42-53: three objections and their replies
 - nn. 54-6: reply to the second objection (= n. 16)
- nn. 57-8: replies to the original objections

Some helpful texts from *Ordinatio* III, d. 2, q. 2

n. 73: ‘The whole is a being other than all the parts taken together or separately’

n. 78: ‘It is another being, by another absolute entity’

nn. 81-4: ‘So I say that, beyond the form which perfects matter (and because of this is called the form of a part) . . . it is not necessary to posit some form that as it were perfects both matter and form, because matter and form are not parts of the same type in a whole, or elements perfectible by some third act, but one is properly perfectible, and the other act, and this is the reason why they make one thing *per se*, from Metaphysics VIII.

‘If however the form of the whole is understood not as something constituting the whole, but the whole nature, as a quiddity, in this way it can certainly be conceded that the form of the whole is other than the form of a part, and that the nature or quiddity can be called a form (as is clear from the Philosopher, Metaphysics V, the chapter on cause). . . .

‘But with respect to what is it the form? I reply and say that [it is a form] with respect to the whole composite, not an informing form, but a form by which the composite is a being quidditatively; and in this way the whole being is formally the form of the whole; . . . not indeed that the form of the whole is as it were its cause, causing with matter and the partial form a whole, as it were, but is the whole considered precisely, according to the manner in which Avicenna spoke in Metaphysics V, “horseness is just horseness.”

‘And if you seek for a cause of this entity, I say that it is a third thing distinct from its causes, and is from them, causally, and not from other causes.’

Bibliography

On *Metaphysics* VII, q. 16, and VIII, q. 4:

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