

*the*  
**Fountain**  
**of Life**

*(Fons Vitae)*

by

SOLOMON BEN JUDAH IBN GABRIEL  
(Avicbron)

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P R E F A C E

Solomon ben Judah ibn Gabirol, known to the Middle Ages as Avicbron, 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 renderings and different Latin words may represent a single idea. The informed judgment of the translator is constantly called into play.

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 Baemker's collation of the then-known four manuscripts (1895) is wholly praiseworthy, and the subsequently discovered Toledo manuscript offers few variants. Baemker'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.

Of special utility have been Fernand Brunner's *La Source de Vie*, Livre III (Paris, 1950) and A.M. Gouichon's *Lexique de la Langue Philosophique d'Ibn Sina* (Paris, 1938). Harry Wedeck's *The Fountain of Life* (New York, 1962) contains Book III only and adheres

l:osely to Brunner's French. R. E. Latham's Revised  
Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish  
Sources (London, 1965) has been occasionally helpful.

The numbered sections have been given titles  
and a brief resume of each has been provided. Foot-  
notes and references designate similarities to Aris-  
totle 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 intel-  
lectual 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 commen-  
tary. First issued in 1954, it has now been totally  
revised, although unfortunately too late for the non-  
agenarian 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.

THE BOOK OF THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE  
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

OR

THE IDEA OF UNIVERSAL MATERIAL AND STRUCTURE

Divided into five books. First, preliminar-  
ies to the identification of universal material  
and universal structure and to the identification  
of material and structure in composite substances.  
Second, on the substance that supports the corpor-  
eity of the universe. Third, on the affirmation  
of elemental substances. Fourth, on the art of  
apprehending material and structure in elemental  
substances. Fifth, on universal material and un-  
iversal structure.

## B O O K O N E

PRELIMINARIES TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF UNIVERSAL  
MATERIAL AND STRUCTURE AND TO THE IDENTIFICATION  
OF MATERIAL AND STRUCTURE 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.*

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.

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 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 of the Divine; hence all quietness and all activity derive from reasoned purpose and lead to the restoration of man's vital principle 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?

MASTER Since to know is the most excellent of all the functions of man, what he most of all needs

I, 2

MATERIAL AND STRUCTURE

5

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 reasoned purpose of the supreme One.

DISCIPLE Please explain what you mean.

MASTER Reasoned purpose 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 reasoned purpose.

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

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

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 instincts 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 animating principle and the structure of it 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. 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 cognitive principle 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 animating principle. 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 of 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 material and universal structure, 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?

MASTER 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.

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

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

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

MASTER Let us first examine the nature of universal being and whatever attributes can appertain to it; then motion, and finally the reasoned purpose that controls and sustains all things.

DISCIPLE Is the nature of universal being single or multiple?

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

DISCIPLE Which two are those?

MASTER Universal material and universal structure.

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

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

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

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

DISCIPLE How can they be?

MASTER Because primary universal material is more elemental than any other and is the ultimate of all material; while universal structure is more elemental than any other and unites all structure.

## 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 material and the other as structure.

MASTER Are you now certain that you understand what substance is and what contingency 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 material and the other universal structure?

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 sciences of material and structure, of reasoned purpose 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 material and structure; the animating principle, which is like reasoned purpose; 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 reasoned purpose and the primary Existent.

DISCIPLE Is there some other science other than that of material and structure and that of the primary Existent?

MASTER The whole of philosophy is divided into three parts, or the science of material and structure, the science of reasoned purpose and the science of the primary Existent.

DISCIPLE Why is all philosophy in three parts?

MASTER Because these three alone exist: material and structure, the primary Existent and reasoned purpose as the mean between the extremes.

DISCIPLE Why do these three alone exist?

MASTER This is why: anything created requires a cause and some intermediary between. Now the cause is the primary Existent; what has been created is material and structure; and the intermediary is reasoned purpose.

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

MASTER An example of material and structure is as it were the physical substantiality of a human being and its structure--taking as structure the composite of bodily members. For reasoned purpose take the animating principle, and for the primary Existent reason.

DISCIPLE Which of these studies takes precedence?

MASTER In the way of instruction, the study of material and structure takes precedence over that of reasoned purpose and of the primary Existent; but in the way of existence the opposite is the case.

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

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

DISCIPLE Is any one of these a branch of another one?

MASTER Material and structure are branches of reasoned purpose. Beyond this nothing can be said until you master the science of material and structure and that of reasoned purpose.

8

The nature of the animating principle

*The animating principle is lofty, discriminating, pervading all and pervading all. It pervades 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 material and structure, because this first division of philosophy is prior to the two subsequent ones.

DISCIPLE Please help me to acquire a true understanding of universal material and universal structure.

MASTER 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 contingencies of the animating principle 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 animating principle 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 animating principle were not keenly perceptive and strong, penetrating and perceiving all.

MASTER If you have now achieved true knowledge of the nature of the animating principle 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, material and structure.

9

The fivefold distribution of the present work

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

*But since transcending substance requires proofs of its existence, a third book will discuss the elemental substances. A fourth will examine the material and structure of the elemental substances, and a fifth will survey universal material and universal structure in themselves.*

DISCIPLE I have already learned all I could about the animating principle, although without completing what I ought to know. Nevertheless let us begin now to examine universal material and structure. 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 material and universal structure, we ought to state that what is made up of them is twofold: one is compound physical substance and the other is elemental transcending substance. Physical substance also divides into two: one is the physical material that carries the structure of the qualities, and the other is the transcending material that carries physical structure.

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

Once the argument in these four treatises is complete, we shall then have to examine universal material and structure 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 material and structure will be found in these five treatises that we have specified. Such, then, is the whole content of the present work.

### The properties of universal material

*Universal material and structure 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 material 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 material and structure! Let us, therefore, undertake the inquiry into them that we proposed.

MASTER The existence of universal material and universal structure 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 material and structure 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 If there is only one universal material for everything, the following properties belong to it: self-existence, singleness of nature, sustenance 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 material?

MASTER It must possess them if it has existence.

DISCIPLE How is that?

MASTER The material must exist, because what does not exist cannot be the material of what does. It is said to be self-existing so that reasoning will not regress to infinity (as it would do) if material were not self-existing. Its true being is a unity because what we require is a single material for all things. It sustains multiplicity, since diversity depends on structures and structures are not self-existent. It bestows on all things its own nature and identity, 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 material is by a rational reduction, eliminating all structures until the very last. This can be done, for example, by eliminating from the cosmic sphere color, shape, corporeity, substantiality and the transcending concepts until a self-emergent created entity is reached which stands alone and supports all these structures. The discipline does this but fails to find any universal material supporting all and differing from all.*

DISCIPLE It's quite evident that universal material must have these properties.

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

DISCIPLE How am I to make this search?

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

DISCIPLE Please give an example.

MASTER A good example is the cosmic sphere, of whose structures the first to occur is color, then shape, then corporeity, then substantiality, then the

remaining ones, which is to say the transcending concepts, until you reach that of a single self-existent created entity sustaining all these structures. 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 structures 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 material supporting everything yet differing from everything.

MASTER Did you not grant that one of the properties of universal material 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 material to provide them?

12

Diversity arises from structure, not from material

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

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

MASTER The true being of material cannot differ from that of existing things. However, these are made different from material by the structures it acquires, or in other words by the differentiae that

distinguish it. Accordingly the variety present in manifest existents comes from manifest structures and similarly the variety in unmanifest existents comes from unmanifest structures. Therefore diversity occurs by reason of the structures of existing things; but the invisible reality that receives the structures is undiversified primary universal material.

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 structures and yet their fundamental material to be one and the same, with no difference between the true being of that material and their own, you will realize thereby that existents are diverse as to structure but their fundamental material is one, and its true being is no other than their own.

13

The properties of universal structure

*These are (a) to subsist in another, (b) to bring it to completion, and (c) to endow it with existence. Indispensable to structure is to be supported; and without structure nothing truly has existence or completion. But does not material exist? Not except as transcending structure 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 material, since I have found its properties in existing things. Now please also help me to discover universal structure in the same way.

MASTER In the same way, then, take note of the properties of universal structure, 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 structures of existing things, you have indeed discovered universal structure.

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

MASTER Indispensable to structure is that it is supported, since if not supported it will support. In that case structure will be material and will have

the concept of material. But to perfect the true being in which it inheres and endow it with existence is also a function of structure, since no entity can be what it is without structure.

DISCIPLE But did we not previously state that material also exists?

MASTER We asserted that material had existence only when transcending structure was conferred on it; but in itself it lacks the existence that it gains when structure 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 structures of existents. But on what basis can I claim the existence of a universal structure from which the being and perfection of all structures arises?

#### 14 Universal material and structure taken together

*Universal material and structure 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 structure, and so a single common or general structure must exist for them. This is necessary because they are contingent and not self-emergent; and so their relation to what supports them is the same as with particular structures.*

*The four elements are not observable in themselves, but can be deduced from observation of animals; and the same is true of other structures. 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 material and structure 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 material and structure.

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 structure of each element is not that of another, and hence there must exist one structure that is common to them all?

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

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

DISCIPLE I quite understand the substrata of particular structures, 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 structures. 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 structures 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*

*substantiality that supports the structures of the elements is the same as the relation of that substantiality to these structures. In the chain of sequence, primary material is the most unmanifest, and sense-known structures the most manifest.*

MASTER The elements certainly differ in their qualities and yet are alike in being physical substantiality. 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 physical substantiality that underlies the structures 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 substantiality 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 substantiality that supports the structures of the elements is the same as the relation between this substantiality and those structures.

This consideration will reveal to you what lies behind the substance that is the substratum for the physical substantiality of other substances that are themselves substrata and subsist in each other; until you reach the primordial substratum that is the universal material 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 material and the totally manifest tangible structures.

DISCIPLE Let us go back to what we were saying about physical substantiality as substratum for the structures of the elements.

16

The substratum for universal and for particular structures

*Just as there is a single physical substantiality as substratum for the four elements, so is there one for particular structures; and this is applicable also to the cosmic sphere. Yet since material never separates from structure, it is difficult to demonstrate their difference.*

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

DISCIPLE Yes, that is clear.

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

DISCIPLE That must be so.

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

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 cosmic sphere, because it coincides 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 structure is never separate from material, material is different from structure?

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

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

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

*The disciple has now learned the four kinds of material and structure: particular artificial material, particular natural material, universal natural material that accepts generation, and cosmic material. In each of these materials is its supported structure, and although different, all concur in the concept of material and structure. In natural sensibles, whether universal or particular,*

*nothing but material and structure is present.*

*Structures agree in being structures of physical substantiativity. They are one, for instance, in species and yet many in individuals as separate instances of species. In sense-perceptibles, universal material must be present and also universal structure.*

(The Master continues) In due course, however, we shall establish the true separateness of structure and material when we take up the substance that supports the nine categories.

DISCIPLE I know the ones you mean.

MASTER Therefore any structure supported in the substantiativity of the cosmic sphere will be like the universal structures that subsist in the substantiativities of the elements, just as these were like the particular structures subsisting in what is constituted of the elements.

DISCIPLE That's how it must be. But why do you separate the substance of the cosmic sphere from that of the elements, since they coincide in quantity and therefore must be a single substantiativity?

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

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

MASTER Exactly as we were able to state that the substantiativity 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 cosmic sphere is a physical substantiativity?

MASTER The physical substantiativity of the cosmic sphere cannot be denied, because physical properties and differentiae are evident in it. However, some one may deny that it is a substantiativity 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 I have come to know the four kinds of material and the four of structure.

MASTER What are they?

DISCIPLE Particular artificial material, particular natural material, universal natural material subject to generation, and cosmic material. And on the other hand, in the case of each of these materials its structure sustained within it.

MASTER Well learned! But now in addition you must understand that these four kinds of materials and structures, although disparate, yet share in the concept of material and structure.

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 material and structure alone exist.

DISCIPLE Just so.

MASTER Parts come together to form a whole, and these materials and structures 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 physical substantiality? And do not structures similarly coincide in being the structure of substantiality? And so structures considered as a species--that of sensible structure--are one, even if as individuals in their singleness they are many.

DISCIPLE They are indeed.

MASTER Therefore what must exist in sense-perceptibles is a universal material, which is physical substantiality; and a universal structure, comprising everything supported in physical substantiality.

DISCIPLE That's the way it must be.

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