

BONAVENTURE'S THEORY OF INDIVIDUATION*

1. Introduction



BONAVENTURE does not give an isolated treatment of individuation, addressing it only in the context of largely theological concerns; nevertheless, a clear and coherent general theory of individuation can be extracted from his scattered remarks. Bonaventure identifies the metaphysical principles of matter and form intrinsic to a thing as jointly necessary to account for the individuality of the individual, and, when such principles produce a substantial unity, to entail the distinctness of the individual from all else. His detailed explanation of how these principles concur in the metaphysical constitution of the individual is subtle and complex, crucially depending on an alignment of the form/matter distinction with the act/potency distinction. Since Bonaventure explicitly denies that there is any single principle or cause of individuation, maintaining instead that the minimal unit of analysis is a pair of jointly necessary principles, his theory is strikingly different from other theories put forward in this period; it is similar in some respects to the theory advanced much later by Suárez (see J. Gracia's contribution to this volume). It is not clear that Bonaventure's alternative approach can ultimately be successful. Nevertheless, an examination of his treatment of individuation proves to be rewarding, because his approach calls into question several assumptions that are uncritically adopted in more traditional approaches to the problem of individuation.

The discussion will proceed as follows. In §2, the criteria Bonaventure adopts for individuality and associated notions such as singularity and incommunicability will be examined. In §3, Bonaventure's rejection of alternative solutions to the problem of individuation, and his own proposed solution, will be put forward. In §4, the alignment of form/matter with

* References to Bonaventure, unless stated otherwise, are taken from *Sanctae Bonaventurae opera omnia*, edita studio et cura pp. Collegii S. Bonaventurae; Florence: Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi), ex typographia Collegii SS. Bonaventurae, X volumina (1882–1902), and are largely drawn from his *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi* (hereafter abbreviated as *Sent.*) in tom. I–IV of the above. All translations are my own; in citations of the Latin text, the punctuation of the original has been retained. References to the latter are given in standard form: book, distinction, part (if any), article, question, section of the question.

act/potency will be explored. In §5, the contrast between 'local' and 'global' accounts of individuation will be put forward as a way of making sense of Bonaventure's solution to the problem of individuation. In §6, the remaining problems of distinctness and discernibility will be taken up.

Two remarks about the following investigation are in order. First, the account of individuation studied here will be that which Bonaventure offers for *created* beings, creatures. As customary with mediæval philosophers, Bonaventure offers an entirely different account of individuality and distinctness in the case of the divine: God's individuality and distinctness, the individuality and distinctness of the divine persons in the Trinity, and the distinctness of the human and divine natures in the Incarnation. These topics will be addressed only when they have a bearing on the individuation of creatures. Second, most of the investigation will focus on questions of sameness and difference at a time, rather than over an interval of time—'synchronic' versus 'diachronic' identity. Mediæval philosophers often treated diachronic identity as secondary, deriving it from the account given for synchronic identity; whether this holds true for Bonaventure or not, the problem of identity over time will not be taken up here.

2. Criteria of Individuality

Although Bonaventure's terminology is not completely stable, he seems to identify three criteria that constitute individuality, *i. e.* criteria that make something to be an individual rather than any other kind of entity. An individual (*i*) is undivided in itself; (*ii*) subsists *in se* and *per se*; and (*iii*) is distinct or divided from others.² Each of these deserves further comment.

² In III *Sent.* d.5 art.2 q.2 *resp.*, Bonaventure says that an individual is that which is "undivided in itself and distinct from others" (*in se indivisum et ab aliis distinctum*). Somewhat later, in III *Sent.* d.10 art.1 q.3 *resp.*, he says that something may be called 'individual' in two ways: as that which is "undivided in itself" (*indivisum in se*), and as that which is "divided from others and subsists *in se* and *per se*" (*ab aliis divisum et subsistit in se et per se*). Three points should be noted. First, since Bonaventure's concern in the latter question is to distinguish the senses in which it can be said that Christ, as man, is an individual, it seems reasonable to take these two 'ways' in which something can be called 'individual' as component elements of a single sense rather than as two distinct senses associated with a single word, which would render 'individual' ambiguous; this interpretation may be supported by Bonaventure's claim, discussed in §6, that being distinct or divided from others is consequent upon being undivided. Second, I propose to treat the formulations 'distinct from others' and 'divided from others' as equivalent; the choice of words is otherwise similar, and there is no support in the texts for a distinction between 'distinct' and 'divided.' Third, it is not clear whether Bonaventure intended the characterization 'subsists *in se* and *per se*'

As for (i): the connection between ‘individual’ and ‘undivided’ is suggested by the form and etymology of *individuum*. Bonaventure does not explain the nature of the ‘division’ in question, but his discussion makes it clear that he endorses the standard mediæval account, described later by Duns Scotus (for example) as follows: an individual is incapable of being divided into ‘subjective’ parts, that is, of being divided into many parts each of which is of the same nature or kind as the whole of which they are parts.³ The standard contrast is with the universal, which is capable of being divided into such subjective parts; thus the species *man* may be ‘divided’ into many men, but Socrates cannot be so divided. Therefore, individuality is at least in part a modal feature, involving the impossibility of a division into subjective parts.

As for (ii): for present purposes, we can take ‘subsistence’ as a generalization of ‘existence’; only actual beings can be said to exist, but possible beings may be said to ‘subsist,’ and some possible beings—say, the twin brother of Socrates—may correctly be characterized as individuals.⁴

to be an additional factor or to be an explanation of ‘divided from others’; the former seems to me the more plausible view, since it is this characterization alone which allows Bonaventure to maintain that the human nature of Christ is not an individual (since it subsists through the uncreated Word and not in and through itself).

³ Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 2 n. 48, in tom. VII of *Iohanni Duns Scoti opera omnia*, studio et cura Commissionis Scotisticae (ad fidem codicum edita), praeside P. Carolo Balić, Civitatis Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950–; see also A. Wolter’s contribution to this volume. Note that this characterization presupposes rather than explains the ‘division,’ and clearly does not exclude forms of division into nonsubjective parts: Socrates’s foot is a genuine part of him, but not a subjective part. It seems clear that ‘inability to be divided into subjective parts’ is the mediæval correlate to our contemporary notion of ‘uninstantiability,’ with the added virtue that it is not taken as primitive but rather as a consequence of more fundamental metaphysical characteristics.

⁴ The term ‘subsist’ (*subsistere*) carries much more philosophical and theological baggage than this. The philosophical baggage largely stems from the remarks of Boethius in *Contra Eutychem* III.44–50, where he says that “that which does not require accidents in order that it might be ‘subsists’ . . . individuals also subsist” (*The Consolation of Philosophy and the Theological Tractates*, edited and translated by E. K. Rand and revised by H. F. Stewart, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard and Heinemann: London 1978²). The individual ‘supports’ accidents, but does not require them. Bonaventure seems to incorporate this sense in the additional clause that the being is *per se*. The theological baggage derives from the attempt to find Latin equivalents for the Greek trinitarian vocabulary of the Church Fathers and early Councils; however, since Bonaventure’s characterization is intended to cover the case of creatures as well, we shall not pursue its theological import here. This interpretation is at best a first approximation; it will be modified in §§4–5 with the discussion of the relation between

Whether they are in fact individuals depends on whether they are *in se* and *per se*. For an entity to be *in se* is for it not to be 'in' another, for example by inherence, as accidents are in substance. (Note that this entails that accidents, strictly speaking, are not individuals, although we may certainly speak of accidents being individualized by their presence in an individual substance while in themselves they are non-individual; Bonaventure draws this consequence explicitly in III *Sent.* d. 10 art. 1 q. 2 *resp.*) For an entity to be *per se* is for it to require nothing else in order to be. It is notoriously difficult to spell out this criterion.⁵ Bonaventure seems to mean no more by it than that no further essential factors are required for the entity to exist, although non-essential factors may be required. Hence the twin brother of Socrates is a *per se* being, since no additional essential factors would be required for his existence, despite the fact that he needs determinate size, shape, color, location, and the like, as well as existence, to be an actual being. Bonaventure, in common with other philosophers, held that in the case of creatures being *in se* and being *per se* are either jointly present or absent: "every creature is either a being *per se* and *in se*, and so composed out of others, or is a being *cum alio* and *in alio*, and so composed with another" (I *Sent.* d. 8 art. 2 q. unica *resp.*).

As for (*iii*): an individual must have internal unity and independence, as spelled out in (*i*) and (*ii*) respectively, and also must be distinct or 'divided' from other beings. Note that this may be the result of a distinct principle or cause: that which makes a thing either the very thing that it is, or the kind of thing that it is, need not be the same as that which makes a thing different from others, either of the same kind or of different kinds.

These criteria determine what it is to be individual. Hence if there are individuals—and Bonaventure certainly holds that there are—they must satisfy these criteria, which in turn means that each individual possesses determinate metaphysical features in virtue of which it can satisfy these criteria. Therefore, Bonaventure's general theory of individuation must identify these determinate features, which explain the individual's inability

the mediæval *ens in potentia* and possible beings.

⁵ There are special theological difficulties. Interpreted strictly, it seems to entail that only God is a *per se* being, since only God literally requires nothing else to be (a conclusion later explicitly drawn by Spinoza); furthermore, each creature is created or sustained by God, which suggests a kind of existential dependence, and each creature is composite, which suggests the need for an external agent to combine its constituent elements. There are also philosophical difficulties: even if primary substances can be loosely considered 'independent' entities, a being such as Socrates, who is at least in part a corporeal substance, must have some color, some weight, some position, and the like, which suggests some kind of 'dependence' of a substance upon its accidents.

to be divided into subjective parts, how the individual requires no further essential factors, and the differentiation of the individual from all else. As we shall see in §3, Bonaventure identifies the principles of matter and form that are intrinsic to the individual as jointly necessary to account for its unity and independence, entailing its differentiation from others.

There is a close parallel between individuality and singularity: to be singular is ‘to be predicable of only one,’ namely in an identity-statement such as “This is Socrates.”⁶ Hence singularity is a linguistic property, not a metaphysical one. Yet Bonaventure understands the linguistic properties of terms to be grounded in real features of their referents, so that it is precisely because something is individual that a term directly referring to it can be predicated of it alone. Thus no separate account of the logic of singular terms is required.

Another notion closely related to individuality is incommunicability. To be incommunicable, in Bonaventure’s view, is “not to be part of another or entering into the composition of a third [thing]” (III *Sent.* d. 5 art. 2 q. 2 *resp.*). Individuality need not entail incommunicability; Bonaventure specifically describes the separated human soul as singular, and hence individual, but as communicable since it is apt to be united with a body as an essential feature (III *Sent.* d. 5 art. 2 q. 3 *resp.*). However, incommunicability marks out a kind of ‘unshareability’ in common with individuality, and in fact is the generalization of individuality appropriate to the case of the Trinity; many, if not most, of Bonaventure’s remarks on individuation occur in discussions of incommunicability.

Armed with these notions, then, we can turn to an examination of Bonaventure’s general theory of individuation and in particular to making sense

⁶ This characterization of singularity derives from Porphyry by way of Boethius: see Boethius’s translation of Porphyry’s *Isagoge*, edited by L. Minio-Paluello in the series *Aristoteles latinus* I.6–7, Desclée de Brouwer: Paris 1966, 7. However, neither Porphyry nor Boethius draw a strict distinction between individuality and singularity—see J. Gracia’s discussion of the legacy of the early Middle Ages in this volume. Bonaventure cites this characterization in III *Sent.* d. 5 art. 2 q. 2 *resp.* explicitly as a definition of singularity. In III *Sent.* d. 10 art. 1 q. 2 *resp.* he says that something may be loosely called ‘individual’ if it is said of only one, although in this sense even an accident may be called ‘individual’ (ruled out by the second criterion of individuality); such a usage is obviously transferred to the level of reality from the linguistic level where it strictly belongs. It should be noted that in Porphyry and Boethius, as indeed in Bonaventure, the characterization is given as ‘what is predicated of only one,’ but Bonaventure is clear that predicability is at issue, not actual predication: in III *Sent.* d. 2 art. 2 q. 2 *resp.* he posits the case that there is only one man, but even then the term ‘man’ would not thereby be singular, since it is a matter of what a term is ‘apt’ to be predicated of, *i. e.* its predicability.

of his claim that “in the case of creatures individuation arises from a double principle” (II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 q. 3 *resp.*), namely form and matter.

3. The ‘Double Principle’ of Individuation

In II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 Bonaventure addresses the question of ‘personal discreteness’ in angels, that is, whether some angels are distinct persons of the same species; since Bonaventure takes personhood to entail individuality, much of his discussion is devoted to an analysis of ‘individual discreteness’: the problem of individuation.⁷

In q. 2 Bonaventure asks whether personhood in angels is substantial or accidental. He rejects the reply that individual discreteness comes from accidents, arguing first that accidents depend on individual substances for their being and hence are consequent to the individuality⁸ of the essence (fund. 3), and second that accidents cannot be the source of numerical distinctness since diverse accidents are numerically one in the substance (fund. 6).⁹ (The other arguments offered are specific to personal discreteness.) Bonaventure directly asserts his rejection of accidental individuation: “nor can it be true that individual distinctness is by accidents, since individuals differ according to substance, not only according to accidents” (*resp.*). However, Bonaventure tries to accommodate the merits of the intuition that accidents are involved in individuation in his response to the question:¹⁰

⁷ Bonaventure does not in general distinguish between the principle of multiplication of individuals within a species and the problem of individuation, other than in the special case of the divine; since everything else falls into a species, there is no pressing need to sharply distinguish the two questions.

⁸ Reading *individualitatem* for *individuitatem* in the text.

⁹ Each argument assumes something a defender of accidental individuation might not be prepared to grant. Bonaventure supports the antecedent of the first argument by Aristotle’s dictum in the *Categories* that “no accident exists except in an individual substance,” but this need not entail that accidents essentially depend on the individuality of the substance—only that accidents cannot exist unless an individual substance exists, which is compatible with the claim that the inherence of the accident in the species brings about the individual, that is, that the individuality of the substance depends on accidents. The second argument assumes that the numerical identity of distinct accidents in an individual prevents any accident from being the cause of the individuality of the substance, which certainly need not be the case. For example, someone might hold that one particular accident causes the individuality of the substance, which then is responsible for the numerical identity of all other accidents.

¹⁰ II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 q. 2 *resp.* (tom. II 160a-b): “Discretio autem individualis duo dicit, scilicet individuationem et consequenter distinctionem. Individuatio autem est ex principiorum indivisione et appropriatione; ipsa enim rei principia, dum coniu-

'Individual discreteness' expresses two things, namely individuation and, consequently, distinctness. Individuation is from the indivision and appropriation of principles. The principles of a thing, when they are conjoined, appropriate each other and produce the individual. But being discrete or being distinct from another is consequent upon this, and from this there arises number, and so an accidental property consequent upon substance. Thus 'individual discreteness' expresses something accidental and something substantial. . . therefore, it should be stated that any individual discreteness whatever comes from the existence of a natural form in matter.

The last sentence gives the key to interpreting the 'indivision' and 'appropriation' of principles. These terms describe the metaphysical union of the principles of form and matter, which jointly constitute the individual. There is an appropriation of form to matter when the form is or becomes the form of this matter, and there is an appropriation of matter to form when the matter is or becomes the matter of this form. The indivision of matter and form is for these two 'appropriated' principles to be unified with each other.

So understood, there is a serious difficulty: how can form be appropriated to matter unless matter is already individuated, so as to be *this* matter, and how can matter be appropriated to form unless form is already individuated, so as to be *this* form? If matter were prior to form, or form prior to matter, there would be an obvious solution. The prior principle would be responsible for the individuation of the other principle, and a more fundamental account would have to be given of the individuality of the prior principle. And, in fact, priority is the issue in the Bonaventure's next question.

In q. 3 Bonaventure asks whether individual discreteness is due to the formal principle or to the material principle, noting that there has been a debate over the proper response (although without identifying the participants in the debate). He describes the traditional alternatives (*resp.*): some philosophers have said "that individuation comes from matter, since 'individual' does not add anything beyond the species but matter," although "others saw the issue otherwise, namely that individuation would be from the form, and said that beyond the form of the *species specialissima* there is an individual form." Yet Bonaventure rejects each of these positions as involving something implausible. He says: "it is quite difficult to see how

guntur, invicem se appropriant et faciunt individuum. Sed ad hoc consequitur esse discretum sive esse distinctum ab alio, et surgit ex hoc numerus, et ita accidentalitas proprietatis, consequens ad substantiam. . . Et sic individualis discretio dicit aliquid accidentale, et aliquid substantiale. . . Dicendum igitur, quod quemadmodum individualis discretio ex exsistentia formae naturalis in materia."

matter, which is common to everything, would be the main principle and cause of distinctness; again, it is difficult to grasp how form is the entire and special cause of numerical distinctness... how shall we say that two fires differ formally (or even any other way), [fires] which are made many and numerically distinguished only by the division of a [single] continuous [fire], where there is no induction of a new form?" Matter is unsuited for individuation because in itself it is common; form because there are intuitive counterexamples, such as the division of a continuous whole into parts of the same kind, when no new form seems to be induced.

Bonaventure therefore embraces a third position:¹¹

Hence there is a third position which is much clearer, namely that individuation arises from the actual conjunction of matter with form, from which conjunction each appropriates the other to itself—just as it is clear that when an impression or stamping of many seals on wax which previously was one takes place, neither the seals can be made many without the wax, nor is the wax enumerated except because diverse seals come about in [the wax]. Still, if you were to ask from which [individuation] comes principally, it should be stated that an individual is a this-something (*hoc aliquid*). That it is a *this*, it has more principally from the matter, by reason of which the form has a location in space and time. That it is *something*, it has from the form. An individual has being (*esse*) and also has existence (*existere*). Matter gives existence to the form, but form gives actual being (*actum essendi*) to the matter. Therefore, in the case of creatures, individuation arises from a double principle.

In short, Bonaventure rejects the suggestion that either principle might be prior to the other; each provides a necessary component of individuality. Matter locates the form in space and time. Form actualizes the potencies

¹¹ II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 q. 3 *resp.* (tom. II 109b–110a): “Ideo est tertia positio satis planior, quod individuatio consurgit ex actuali coniunctione materiae cum forma, ex qua coniunctione unum sibi appropriat alterum; sicut patet, cum impressio vel expressio fit multorum sigillorum in cera, quae prius est una, nec sigilla plurificari possunt sine cera, nec cera numeratur nisi quia fiunt in ea diversa sigilla. Si tamen quaeras, a quo veniat principaliter; dicendum, quod individuum est hoc aliquid. Quod sit hoc, principaliter habet a materia, ratione cuius forma habet positionem in loco et tempore. Quod sit aliquid, habet a forma. Individuum enim habet esse, habet etiam existere. Existere dat materia formae, sed essendi actum dat forma materiae... Individuatio igitur in creaturis consurgit ex duplici principio.” Bonaventure apparently considered this passage to be his most complete statement about individuation; he later refers to it as providing necessary details about individuation, *e. g.* in III *Sent.* d. 10 art. 1 q. 2 (where the theory is applied to the case of Christ’s individuality).

latent in matter. Yet this account seems vulnerable to the difficulty outlined previously: how can matter ‘locate’ the form if the form is not already individualized, and how can form ‘actualize’ the matter if the matter is not already individualized? By identifying a double principle of individuation, Bonaventure seems to inherit all the problems associated with each traditional solution without receiving any explanatory advantages.

The key to understanding Bonaventure’s attempt to resolve this difficulty is provided in the wax-analogy. The composite entity that is the seal has intrinsic principles of matter and form: the matter of the seal is wax, and the form of the seal is the shape embossed on the signet-ring.¹² The matter ‘exists’ prior to the seal, at least as a lump of wax; the form ‘exists’ prior to the seal, at least on the ring. When the signet-ring is pressed on the wax, the abstract geometrical shape has been given existence, namely in the wax, and determinate potencies of the wax are actualized, namely the power to acquire a given shape. The result is the individual composite entity, the seal. Hence three factors in the analogy must be clarified: first, how matter can give existence to the form without itself being individualized; second, how form can actualize the potencies of matter without itself being individualized; third, how the actual conjunction of non-individualized matter and non-individualized form produces a determinate individual. Bonaventure provides subtle and sophisticated accounts of the first and second factors, and the third factor can be accounted for, at least in part, by drawing a distinction between local and global explanations of individuality. This will be examined in §5. To begin with, then, we shall have to examine Bonaventure’s understanding of form and matter more closely, and in particular the close relationship between form and matter on the one hand, and act and potency on the other hand.

4. Form and Matter as Act and Potency

Bonaventure does not explicitly argue for the alignment of form/matter with act/potency; it is assumed rather than explored. However, we can identify two general contexts in which this alignment takes place, namely in analyzing the composition of created beings and in identifying the factors involved in change. The first context may be illustrated by Bonaventure’s remark in *II Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 1 *resp.*:¹³

¹² Technically it is the mirror-image in relief of the shape embossed on the signet-ring, but this is a needless complication for our purposes; nothing hangs on this point.

¹³ *II Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 1 *resp.* (tom. II 91a): “Non video causam nec rationem quomodo defendi potest quin substantia angeli sit composita ex diversis naturis, et

I see neither cause nor reason how it can be denied that the substance of the angel is a composite of diverse natures, and so is the essence of every creature that is a *per se* being (*ens*); and if it is a composite of diverse natures, those two natures are related in the manner of the actual and the possible, and so as form and matter.

The conclusion Bonaventure draws here—that all created beings are composites of matter and form—is explicitly restated in the next question: “the metaphysician considers the nature of every creature, and especially the substance of *per se* being, in which there is to consider its actual being (*actum essendi*), and form gives this, as well as the stability of *per se* existing, and matter gives this and is what form requires.”¹⁴

The second context in which Bonaventure aligns form and matter with act and potency can be illustrated by Bonaventure’s arguing from the fact of change in the rational soul, which entails act and potency, to the presence in the soul of form and matter (II *Sent.* d. 17 art. 1 q. 2 *resp.*):¹⁵

The rational soul, since it is a this-something (*hoc aliquid*) and apt to subsist *per se*, to act and be acted on, to move and be moved, thus has within itself a foundation of its existence: both a material principle from which it has existence (*existere*) and a formal [principle] from which it has being (*esse*).

All created beings are composites of form and matter, and, as such, composites of act and potency.¹⁶ Therefore, a proper analysis of the nature of

essentia omnis creaturae per se entis; et si composita ex diversis naturis, illae duae naturae se habent per modum actualis et possibilis, et ita materiae et formae.”

¹⁴ II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 2 *resp.* (tom. II 97b): “Metaphysicus considerat naturam omnis creaturae, et maxime substantiae per se entis, in qua est considerare et actum essendi, et hunc dat forma; et stabilitatem per se existendi, et hanc dat et praestat illud cui innititur forma, hoc est materia.”

¹⁵ II *Sent.* d. 17 art. 1 q. 2 *resp.* (tom. II 414b–415a): “Anima rationalis, cum sit hoc aliquid et per se nata subsistere et agere et pati, movere et moveri, quod habet intra se fundamentum suae existentiae: et principium materiale a quo habet existere, et formale a quo habet esse.”

¹⁶ The passages cited are representative; many such are scattered throughout Bonaventure’s works. Note that potency and act need not be identified with matter and form, as P. Robert maintained in *Hylémorphisme et devenir chez saint Bonaventure*, Librairie St.-François: Montreal 1936, 28–45 and 143–148, since there may well be potency and act not assimilated to matter and form (e.g. the species containing the genus potentially). Although Bonaventure’s analysis of compositeness in created beings, as well as his statement and defense of hylemorphism, are more complex than is indicated here, none of the complexity affects the fundamental alignment of act and potency with form and matter. Some details will be considered in §5. The ‘matter’ present in the rational soul is spiritual matter, not corporeal matter, as will be made clear later.

matter and form will have to be concerned with the respects in which matter is aligned with potency and form aligned with act. However, before we can turn to this analysis, some preliminary remarks about *esse* and *existere* are in order.

Although Bonaventure does not offer a systematic account of *esse* and *existere*, their main characteristics (in the case of creatures) are clear.¹⁷ First, *esse* and *existere* are themselves neither essential nor accidental features. They are not any sort of form at all. Bonaventure accepts the traditional axiom ‘*forma dat esse*’ and adds to it the axiom ‘*materia dat existere*,’ but the former takes *esse* to be consequent upon the form, not a form itself, and the latter takes *existere* to be consequent upon matter, not matter itself. Second, *existere* is a feature of actual beings, as opposed to merely possible beings, above and beyond the subsistence or manner of subsistence which such possible beings have. Third, *esse* refers to the actuality possessed by that which is informed by a form.¹⁸ The actuality conferred by the form is therefore correlative to potency and might be described more accurately as ‘actualizedness.’ Hence ‘*actum essendi*’ refers to the actualizing of that which is informed by the form. Everything having *existere* must have *esse*, but the converse need not hold; not every actualization will produce a genuine existent. For example, Socrates’s twin brother is in one sense ‘actualized’ by the forms he possesses, but he is a mere ‘being in potency’ (*ens in potentia*). It is equally true that something may be actualized by a form and yet lack features necessary to be a concrete existent; other forms

¹⁷ The qualification ‘in the case of creatures’ is important: in God, *esse* is an essential feature and is not conferred by any form. More work needs to be done towards understanding Bonaventure’s complex doctrines of *esse* and *existere*. The classic modern study is that of J. Bittremieux, “*Distinctio inter essentiam et esse apud S. Bonaventuram*,” *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 14 (1937), 302–307. For developments see especially G. Klubertanz, “*Esse and Existere in St. Bonaventure*,” *Medieval Studies* 8 (1946), 169–188; L. de Mercin, “Notes sur le problème de l’être selon saint Bonaventure,” *Études franciscaines* (nouvelle série) 11 (1961), 2–16; C. Bigi, “La struttura dell’essere secondo s. Bonaventura,” *Collectanea franciscana* 32 (1962), 209–229; J. F. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure’s Philosophy*, The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies: Toronto 1973, in particular Chapter Two.

¹⁸ Bonaventure does not clearly distinguish two interpretations of the phrase ‘that which is informed’: (i) *esse* is the actuality given by the form to the subject or substrate in which the form inheres; (ii) *esse* is the actuality given by the form to the entire composite of matter and form. The same ambiguity affects his understanding of *actum essendi*. The distinction of the form of the whole and the form of the part discussed later does not clarify the ambiguity. This point is overlooked by Corrado da Altari in “*Individuo e principio di individuazione in S. Bonaventura*,” *Studi francescani* 58 (1961), 264–286.

may be required, since something may be actualized with respect to a given set of potencies and yet possess further potencies that must be actualized in order to exist, or to exist as the thing in question.¹⁹ An acorn is an actual acorn but only potentially an oak-tree, although in some sense it possesses the form of the oak-tree within itself.

Matter, according to Bonaventure, is in itself “a mere being in potency” (II *Sent.* d.3 p.1 art.1 q.3 *resp.*); it is “in potency in every way” and “‘informed’ by every possibility” (II *Sent.* d.12 art.1 q.1 *resp.*), that is, with possibility for all forms (II *Sent.* d.3 p.1 art.1 q.2 *ad* 3). He draws some consequences of this view in an argument that matter, in whatever it is, is numerically one: “since matter is a being wholly in potency, it thus has no act by its essence, no form, and therefore no distinctness; if it has no distinctness and is not nothing, it is thus necessary that it be one without multitude, and so numerically one” (II *Sent.* d.3 p.1 art.1 q.3 *resp.*). Matter by definition is free of all forms, so no distinctness or differentiation is possible. The ‘numerical unity’ matter possesses in virtue of being numerically one by its nature is a special kind of unity; Bonaventure calls it the ‘unity of homogeneity’.²⁰

If [matter] has unity, it has the unity of homogeneity. Clearly, this unity can remain at once in diverse things: if many wineglasses come from the same gold, they are of the same gold by homogeneity. But the gold in one differs from the gold in another, so they are not one

¹⁹ The two cases are not so disparate as might at first seem. The view that possible existence is concrete existence in a possible world is alien to the mediæval framework of potency and act; an *ens in potentia* need not possess all of the features required for concrete existence—it may be what is sometimes called an ‘incomplete’ entity. Indeed, Bonaventure himself talks of ‘completive’ forms (*formae completivae*), that is, forms whose *esse* renders something capable of concrete existence, and at times he underscores this point by saying that forms which are not completive only offer ‘incomplete’ esse. Furthermore, in II *Sent.* d.12 art.1 q.1 *ad* 6 Bonaventure says that an *ens in potentia* is “not entirely something and not entirely nothing, but a medium between non-being and actual being.”

²⁰ II *Sent.* d.3 p.1 art.1 q.3 *resp.* (tom.II 100b): “Sed si habet unitatem, unitatem homogeneitatis habet. Haec autem unitas simul manet in diversis, sicut patet: si de eodem auro fiant multa vasa, illa sunt de eodem auro per homogeneitatem. Sed aurum quod est in uno differt ab auro quod est in alio, adeo ut non sint unum per continuitatem. Si igitur materia non est una actuali simplicitate, ut angelus, nec continuitate, ut mons vel auri frustrum, sed sola homogeneitate, et haec non tollitur per adventum formarum, ita est materia una sub omnibus formis, sicut omnibus formis abstractis. Sed abstractis omnibus formis, nulla est distinctio in materia; immo intelligitur ut simpliciter una. Nunc igitur materia est in omnibus materiatis numero una, quia est ens omnino in potentia.”

by continuity. If, therefore, matter is not one by actual simplicity, like the angel, nor by contrareity, like a mountain or a chunk of gold, but only by homogeneity, and this is not removed by the advent of forms, then matter is one under all forms, as [it is one] with all forms abstracted. But with all forms abstracted, there is no distinctness in matter; rather, it is understood as simply one. Therefore, matter is now numerically one in all things [that have been] made material, since it is a being wholly in potency.

Matter in itself is a homogeneous unity, and questions of individuation do not arise. Bonaventure's view of 'numerical unity' is quite different from the more standard view. In the same discussion, Bonaventure explicitly cautions us against confusing the essence of matter with any kind of corporeal matter (*ad 6*):²¹

If anyone wants to understand the unity of matter, it is necessary for the soul to abstract from individual unity and to climb up beyond the act of the imagination and to think of a being wholly in potency by privation, and so one will somehow be able to grasp it. So long as matter is thought of as an extended mass (*moles*), in no way will one reach the considered unity of essence.

Since "matter considered in itself is neither spiritual nor corporeal" (II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 2 *ad 3*), and is a homogeneous unity in spiritual and corporeal beings, it has neither extension nor volume. Matter is essentially pure passive potency, the capacity to be informed—the infamous *materia prima* of the Scholastics.

However, these remarks pertain only to the essence of matter. Bonaventure is clear on this point: "any capacity consequent upon the essence of matter is indifferently related to spiritual and corporeal form, but since matter is never deprived of all *esse*, matter consequent upon *esse* is one

²¹ II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 3 *ad 6* (tom. II 101b): "Si quis enim vult unitatem materiae intelligere, oportet ab unitate individuali animum abstrahere et super actum imaginationis conscendere et omnino ens in potentia per privationem cogitare, et sic poterit aequaliter capere. Quamdiu enim materia ut moles extensa cogitatur, ad unitatem essentiae consideratam nullo modo pertingitur." To think of matter 'by privation' is only one of the two ways of knowing matter, as Bonaventure explains in II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 1 *resp.*: "Matter is knowable in a twofold way, namely by privation and by analogy. Knowledge by privation is firstly by removing the form, thence removing the disposition* to the form, and considering that essence bare in itself and, as it were, intelligible only in a dark way. Knowledge by analogy is by a consimilar disposition (*habitudinem*); the disposition of matter is by potency, and so this knowledge is by the comparison of matter to form by the mediating potency." [*Reading *dispositionem* with codices bb, cc, and 1, rather than *disponens* with the text.]

thing in spiritual beings and another in corporeal beings" (II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 2 *ad* 3; see also d. 12 art. 1 q. 1 *resp.*). Matter can only exist as informed, that is, along with some form giving it *esse*. For reasons that are partly theological, Bonaventure considers the case of corporeal matter at length. The existence of corporeal matter is directly ascribed to God's creative activity, who informs matter with a single form (II *Sent.* d. 12 art. 1 q. 3 *resp.*):²²

[Corporeal] matter is produced under some form, but it was not a complete form nor one giving complete *esse* to matter. Hence [this form] did not so inform the matter such that it might be called 'informed'; nor was the appetite of matter as yet appeased, and thus matter could still desire other forms. Hence there was a disposition for further forms, not complete perfection. And since unformed matter had an appetite and inclination for many forms, hence, although the form did not have in itself diverse natures, nevertheless matter in its diverse parts had a certain imperfect diversity—not from diverse complete acts, but more from appetites for diverse [forms]—and hence is called a mixture and confused.

The form initially informing matter to produce corporeal matter gave it the basic characteristics of mass and extension, as Bonaventure remarks:²³

Matter was not corporeal in such a way that it was complete in the genus *body*, but in the way in which it had extension and corporeality, since it did not have a perfect actuality of form, as stated before.

Given that corporeal matter has mass and extension, it thereby has spatial

²² II *Sent.* d. 12 art. 1 q. 3 *resp.* (tom. II 300a): "Materia illa producta est sub aliqua forma, sed illa non erat forma completa nec dans materiae esse completum, et ideo non sic formabat quin adhuc materia diceretur informis; nec appetitum materiae adeo finiebat quin materia adhuc alias formas appeteret. Et ideo dispositio erat ad formas superiores, non completa perfectio. Et quoniam ad multas formas materia informis appetitum et inclinationem habebat, ideo, quamvis illa forma non haberet in se naturas diversas, tamen materia in diversis suis partibus quandam diversitatem habebat—non ex diversis actibus completis, sed magis ex appetibus ad diversa—et ideo permixta dicitur et confusa." See also Bonaventure's remarks in II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 2 *ad* 4: "When it is claimed that extension is from matter, it should not be understood that it is from matter according to its essence, but according to its *esse*, insofar as it sustains a corporeal form which is not apt to be in matter unless with extension, although in itself [matter] consists in a simple essence."

²³ II *Sent.* d. 12 art. 1 q. 3 *ad* 5 (tom. II 301a–b): "Materia illa non sic erat corporea quod esset completa in genere corporum, sed sic habebat extensionem et corporeitatem, quia* non habebat perfectam formae actualitatem, sicut praedictum est prius." [*Reading *quia* for *quod* in the text.]

location, as noted in II *Sent.* d. 12 art. 2 q. 3 *resp.*:²⁴

Since [corporeal] matter was a mass having extension, and the empyrean heaven had rotational motion, it was in a place, and since it was bodily (*corpulenta*) substance, it filled place. Again, since it had a certain distinction in its parts according to thinness and thickness, but as a quasi-plenum, it had position according to higher and lower, though only imperfectly.

Therefore, corporeal matter originally had the characteristics of a plenum, filling space.²⁵ There is as yet no real issue regarding individuation, that is, the source of the individuality of corporeal matter, which in its existence still has only a unity of homogeneity; the material quasi-plenum (*semiplenam*) is a quantitative whole, whose parts are only relatively distinguished, and its informing form is as yet unique.²⁶

The succeeding stages in the organization of corporeal matter into ma-

²⁴ II *Sent.* d. 12 art. 2 q. 3 *resp.* (tom. II 306a): “Dicendum quod cum materia illa esset moles habens extensionem, et caelum empyreum haberet ambiens, quod ipsa in loco erat, et cum esset substantia corpulenta, locum replebat. Rursus, cum in partibus distinctionem quandam haberet secundum subtititatem et grossitiem, sed semiplenam, positiones secundum sursum et deorsum quodammodo sed imperfecte habebat.”

²⁵ The aristotelian volumetric definition of ‘place’ as “the innermost unmoving boundary containing” a substance (*Physics* 4.4 212^a20) entails that spatial location, as an accident of individual substances, is not defined by the extended mass which is the initial state of corporeal substance, although Bonaventure’s comments about restricted directionality suggest that position may be defined.

²⁶ Bonaventure is not completely consistent, but it seems plausible that he took the initial form which produces corporeal matter to be light (*lux*) rather than the traditional, and unanalyzeable, ‘form of corporeity’ (*forma corporeitatis*). The remark in II *Sent.* d. 12 art. 1 q. 3 *ad* 5, cited above, is one of the few places he mentions corporeity, and here it is specifically a consequence of the form rather than the form itself. Further, Bonaventure’s discussion in II *Sent.* d. 12 art. 2 q. 2 is inconclusive; there Bonaventure maintains that matter was produced before any of the days of creation in the order of nature, and that the creation of the Earth preceded the creation of light. But the ‘order of nature’ is a non-temporal ordering of logical priority, and it is consistent to suppose that matter is logically prior to its informing, while temporally simultaneous with it. On the positive side, in II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 2 *ad* 5 Bonaventure holds that matter is called ‘dark’ (*tenebra*) by the privation of its form, “which form is light (*lumen*).” In II *Sent.* d. 13 art. 2 q. 2 *resp.* he supports the position that “light is the substantial form of all bodies,” and in *ad* 5 he notes that “the form of light, although it is posited in the same body with other forms, is not posited as an imperfect disposition apt to be perfected by a later form, but rather it is posited as a form and nature that is conservative of every other corporeal form, giving [to such a corporeal form] an efficiency in acting”—a description that would explain how corporeal matter can be homogeneously one in all corporeal bodies and yet give *existere* through spatio-temporal location to corporeal beings.

terial substances are clearly outlined by Bonaventure. First, the elemental forms of earth, air, fire, and water advene on corporeal matter, presumably through direct divine agency.²⁷ Second, the elemental forms enter into the 'mixed form' (*forma mixtionis*), which are most likely familiar stuff-like compounds, for example copper and gold.²⁸ Third, the mixed forms enter into the 'complex form' (*forma complexionis*) of organic bodies, for example flesh and cellulose. At some point in the process, direct divine agency is no longer required for the production of distinct composites of form and matter, and natural agency can take its place. Since the elemental forms of earth, air, fire, and water inform matter already possessed of mass and extension, the resulting composites may be said to have place; they may also have local physical properties such as motion or a tendency to move in a given direction. Such collisions and combinations of the elementary compounds could then naturally produce mixtures.

Organic bodies present a more interesting case. Bonaventure holds that the production and behavior of organic bodies cannot be understood without postulating what he calls, following Augustine, '*rationes seminales*'—principles of growth and development. A *ratio seminalis* is a potency for a given form, a potency which in some sense already 'virtually contains' the form in question. Moreover, this potency is active: in standard cir-

²⁷ The elemental forms are logically posterior to corporeal matter, although it is not clear that their informing corporeal matter is a distinct temporal stage. In II *Sent.* d.12 art. 1 q. 3 *ad* 3 Bonaventure says: "As for when it is objected that the elemental forms are the first in corporeal matter, it should be said that this is true as regards forms which give complete *esse* to matter, but that [initial] form which unformed (*informis*) matter had did not give complete *esse* to it, and so preceded or could precede simple forms as well as composite forms (which attribute complete *esse* to [matter])." It is not clear whether the elemental forms are required for *existere*, or whether the initial form which produces corporeal matter is sufficient.

²⁸ Whether the latter is reducible to the former or is a supervenient form is a difficult question. In II *Sent.* d.18 art. 1 q. 3 *resp.* Bonaventure says that the former 'mediates' or 'acts as a medium' for the latter, which suggests genuine supervenience; in III *Sent.* d.6 art.2 q.1 *resp.* he says "there is a certain union in which there is an alteration of each unifiable [factor] and the production of a third nature, and this is because there is here an incompatibility and no excelling predominance [of either factor], as the elements are united to constitute mixed bodies." The same holds true for the relation of mixed forms to complex forms. In II *Sent.* d.15 art.1 q.2 Bonaventure takes up the production of organic bodies, but the discussion is inconclusive; he says that the body of an animal "exists (*constans*) from the four elements." A satisfactory answer to the question would depend on a more exact analysis of the sense in which Bonaventure can be said to endorse what has come to be known as the doctrine of the 'plurality of forms,' that is, to maintain that there may exist distinct substantial forms simultaneously within the individual.

cumstances, it will be actualized unless prevented. Bonaventure offers two homely examples by way of clarifying the nature of the *ratio seminalis*.²⁹ The form of the rose is already present in the rosebud; the rosebud ‘virtually’ possesses the form of the rose. So long as sufficient sunlight, moisture, and the like are present, the rosebud will develop into a rose, unless prevented from so doing (say, by being cut). Similarly, an embryo virtually possesses the form of that into which it will develop in standard conditions, unless prevented from so developing. This is how matter, which is in itself pure passive potency, can also have “an appetite and inclination for many forms,” as Bonaventure says in II *Sent.* d. 12 art. 1 q. 3 *resp.* (cited previously). Natural agents do not literally create forms, but actualize or permit the actualization of the potencies for form latent within matter (II *Sent.* d. 7 p. 2 art. 2 q. 1 *ad* 4).

Forms are universal. In II *Sent.* d. 18 art. 1 q. 3 Bonaventure asks whether the *ratio seminalis* can be called a universal or singular form (by ‘singular’ here he obviously means ‘individualized’). There are essentially two reasons for postulating universals (*resp.*):³⁰

It is necessary to postulate universal forms due to (i) cognition and (ii) the univocity of predication. Thus if there is a complete cognition only when the whole *esse* of the thing is cognized, and there is no cognition except through form, then there must be some form that includes the whole *esse*. Moreover, we call this [form] the

²⁹ Bonaventure discusses *rationes seminales* at length in II *Sent.* d. 7 p. 2 art. 2 q. 1, the source of the rose-example (*resp.*). The ‘virtual containment’ described in the text abbreviates Bonaventure’s complex and subtle doctrine (*ibid.*): Bonaventure is careful to point out that the form does not, properly speaking, come from the natural agent or from the essence of the matter in which the *ratio seminalis* is found. Rather, *rationes seminales* are created as active potencies inhering in matter (the technical term is that they are ‘concreated’), functioning as the principles “in which, from which, and by which” natural agents may bring about new composites of matter and form. The embryo-example is set forth in II *Sent.* d. 12 art. 1 q. 3 *resp.*

³⁰ II *Sent.* d. 18 art. 1 q. 3 *resp.* (tom. II 441a–b): “Necesse est ponere universales formas propter cognitionem et praedicationis univocationem. Si igitur non est integra cognitio nisi totum esse rei cognoscatur, et non est cognitio nisi per formam, necesse est aliquam formam esse quae complectatur totum esse. Hanc autem dicimus essentiam, et haec est universalis forma, ut dicit Avicenna. (Dicit enim quod essentia nihil aliud est quam quidditas rei universalis.) Similiter, non est vera univocatio nisi quando aliqua in una forma communi realiter assimilantur, quae de ipsis essentialiter praedicatur. Forma autem in qua plura assimilantur non potest esse nisi forma universalis, quae vero essentialiter praedicatur de illis non potest esse nisi forma totum complectens. Forma igitur universalis non est aliud quam forma totius, quae, cum de se nata sit esse in multis, universalis est.”

'essence,' and it is a universal form, as Avicenna says. (He says that the essence is nothing but the quiddity of a universal thing.) Similarly, there is no genuine univocity except when some things are similar to each other in one common form, which is essentially predicated of them. Moreover, the form in which many are similar to one another can only be a universal form, and what is essentially predicated of them can only be a form including the whole. Hence the universal form is nothing other than the form of the whole, which is universal, since it is of itself apt to be in many.

True predication and accurate cognition are grounded on metaphysical facts, as Bonaventure recognizes in his reply to an objection (*ad 3*): "the similarity between Peter and Paul is true and real; and so it is necessary to posit some third [factor] in which they are similar to each other; and in like manner there is a real similarity between a man and an ass, and hence the philosophical consideration [of species and genera] is not empty."³¹

The 'form of the whole' (*forma totius*) is contrasted with the 'form of the part' (*forma partis*) slightly earlier (*resp.*):³²

Form is universal. But not any form whatsoever is strictly universal; there is the form of the part and the form of the whole, and the universal is not the form of the part but rather the form of the whole. Soul is not said to be universal in respect of one man, but rather man. Moreover, those [who hold this position] say that the form of the whole is what gives *esse* to the whole, and this is called the essence of the thing since it includes the whole *esse*; and the

³¹ Bonaventure makes the same point in his *Collationes in Hexæmeron* col. 4 n. 9: "It is plain that two men are similar to each other [in something], but a man and an ass are not; thus the likeness must be grounded and stabilized in some stable form, and not [a form] which is in another since that would be particular—hence in some universal [form]." The passage continues in the Delorme edition as follows: "Note that the form by which one man agrees with another is a real agreement (*convenientia*) stabilized in a universal form" [*Collationes in Hexæmeron et Bonaventuriana quaedam selecta*, ad fidem codicum mss. ed. F. M. Delorme, Bibliotheca franciscana scholastica medii aevii, tom. VII; Florence, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1934: 52].

³² II *Sent.* d. 18 art. 1 q. 3 *resp.* (tom. II 441a): "Universale forma est. Sed non quaelibet forma proprie universale est; est enim forma partis et forma totius, et universale non est forma partis sed forma totius. Anima non dicitur esse universale respectu unius hominis, sed homo. Illam autem dicunt esse formam totius quae quidem dat esse toti, et haec dicitur essentia rei quia totum esse complectitur, and hanc formam considerat metaphysicus. Formam vero partis, quae in genere non habet esse nisi per reductionem, non est dicere proprie universalem; potest tamen aliquo modo dici universalis per radicatione, cum illa est indifferens ad multa, quae possunt fieri ex ipsa, sicut causa dicitur esse universalis quia potest in multa."

metaphysician considers this form. But the form of the part, which has no *esse* in a genus except by reduction, is not strictly called ‘universal’; still, it can be called ‘universal’ by its root (*radicatione*), since it is indifferent to many, which can come about from it, just as a cause is said to be universal because it can [be] in many.

The distinction between these two classes of forms is clarified by Bonaventure’s remarks in III *Sent.* d. 2 art. 2 q. 3 (*resp.*):³³

It should be said the ‘species’ expresses form—not any [form] whatsoever, but the form of the whole, *i. e.* the form including the whole *esse*. It is according to this that Boethius says that “the species is the whole *esse* of its individuals,” and Avicenna and other philosophers agree with this. Therefore, the ‘specific common form’ can be understood in two ways: either (*i*) according to predication, or (*ii*) according to constitution. According to predication, ‘man’ expresses a form common to Peter and Paul. According to constitution, ‘man’ expresses a form simultaneously related to soul and body that results from the conjunction of the soul with the body. The soul and the body concur in constituting one essence. Thence it is that what is constituted from soul and body has one specific form, common by predication to it and to others so constituted, and nonetheless common to the constituting parts by a definite informing and completeness.

In a composite substance such as Socrates, the form of the part is his individual soul and the form of the whole is the species *man*.³⁴ The species gives *esse* to the entire composite, and does so in virtue of the *esse* given to

³³ III *Sent.* d. 2 art. 2 q. 3 *resp.* (tom. III 48b): “Dicendum quod species dicit formam—et non quaecumque, sed formam totius, hoc est formam complectentem totum esse. Iuxta quod dicit Boethius quod ‘species est totum esse individuorum,’ et Avicenna et alii etiam philosophi in hoc concordant. Forma ergo specifica communis dupliciter potest intelligi: aut secundum praedicationem aut secundum constitutionem. Secundum praedicationem ‘homo’ dicit formam communem Petro et Paulo. Secundum constitutionem ‘homo’ dicit formam quae respicit animam et corpus, et quae resultat ex coniunctione animae cum corpore. Anima enim et corpus concurrunt ad unam essentiam constituendam. Et hinc est quod constitutus ex anima et corpore habet unam formam specificam, communem sibi et aliis sic constitutis per praedicationem; communem nihilominus partibus constituentibus per quandam informationem et completionem.”

³⁴ Although the terminology of ‘form of the whole’ and ‘form of the part’ is common to all Scholastics, Bonaventure is explicit that in Socrates the form of the part is his individual soul; the common view held that in Socrates the form of the part is his humanity. For Bonaventure, ‘humanity’ is simply an abstract denomination of *man*, not corresponding to any distinct metaphysical entity.

the body by the soul and the fixed *existere* given to the soul by the body. Only the species is, strictly speaking, universal, since it alone falls under a genus and thereby may be common to many; the form of the part is classed under a genus only by reduction, as a constituent of the form of the whole. In modern terms, the form only of the whole is instantiated. The form of the part is not instantiated, since it is contrasted with the matter which it informs to produce the composite. The form of the whole, on the other hand, may be said to 'include' matter, since it is the form of the entire composite of matter and the form of the part. The form of the whole may for the same reason be said to 'include' the form of the part as a constituent. (Put another way, the actuality of the composite is distinct from the actuality of its constituent parts, though dependent on it; the composite can only be actualized through the actuality of its constituent parts.) Unlike the form of the whole, the *ratio seminalis* is not instantiated. Like the form of the part, the *ratio seminalis* is actualized only in something instantiating a form of the whole. Since the form of the whole may be construed as a further actuality of the form of the part, it makes little difference whether we say that the form virtually contained in the *ratio seminalis* is the form of the whole or only the form of the part.

In II *Sent.* d. 18 art. 1 q. 3 *resp.* Bonaventure describes a common position maintaining that in addition to universal forms there are also individual forms, where an individual form is formally different from its corresponding universal form as more 'complete,' such that in addition to the form *man* in Socrates there would also be the form *Socrateity*. Bonaventure says that "this position is not to be dismissed; it is that of great men and seems to concur with authority, reason, and sense." However, Bonaventure opts for another position, which rejects the existence of individual forms, saying that this position too "is the position of many great men, and indeed the majority approves it more [than the other position]; nor is it without merit, since it too agrees with reason, authority, and sense" and in fact is "more common and more intelligible and closer to sense." Bonaventure describes his position as follows:³⁵

³⁵ II *Sent.* d. 18 art. 1 q. 3 *resp.* (tom. II 441b): "Particularizatur autem non per additionem ulterioris formae, sed per coniunctionem sui cum materia; ex qua coniunctione, materia appropriat sibi formam, et forma materiam, sicut dictum est supra. Et quia nunquam est forma haec separata a materia, nunquam est forma universalis sine particulari. Quamvis autem unum non sit sine altero, differt tamen unum ab altero. Quamvis enim albedo non possit esse sine corpore, differt tamen a corpore. Unde inseparabilitas non ponit identitatem omnimodam."

Moreover, [the universal form] is particularized³⁶ not through the addition of a further form, but through its conjunction with matter; from this conjunction, matter appropriates a form to itself, and form [appropriates] matter [to itself], as stated previously. And since this form is never separated from matter, there is never a universal form without a particular. Although the one is not without the other, still the one differs from the other. Although there cannot be whiteness without body, it still differs from body. Hence inseparability does not entail complete identity.

Forms are universal in themselves, as Bonaventure says in II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 q. 3 *ad* (1)–(3): “no form is individual except according to its conjunction with matter.” Forms may be individualized without being individual or thereby becoming individual—no formal difference is introduced through the conjunction of form and matter, which individualizes the form. The form of the whole becomes concretely realized as the form of the part, but its nature is not altered.

Bonaventure’s rejection of individual forms seems to render his solution to the problem of individuation highly suspect. If forms are not individual, how then can the individuality possessed by individuals be accounted for? Even the combination of form with matter does not seem able to avoid this difficulty, since—whether Bonaventure’s identification of a double principle of individuation is question-begging or not—form is universal of itself. How can indeterminate matter combine with universal form to produce individuality? How can the form of the whole, universal of itself, become actualized as the (individual) form of the part? To see how Bonaventure can respond to these difficulties, and to address the issue of question-begging, we need to put together his accounts of form and matter in their alignment with act and potency, and draw a distinction between local and global explanations of individuation.

5. Local and Global Explanations of Individuation

The scattered threads of Bonaventure’s solution to the problem of individuation can now be drawn together and systematized. The key is found in the common mediæval understanding of modality, shared by Bonaventure, which treats modality as a feature of subjects rather than as characterizing alternative states of affairs. In this sense, modal features may be possessed by subjects: the ability to sing, actually singing, the power to be shaped into

³⁶ The term translated ‘particularized’ is *particularizatur*, which I take as equivalent to ‘individualized.’ Bonaventure does not seem to distinguish between them.

a statue. Such modal features are unlike other properties, which fall under genera and species, and indeed unlike anything else which exists; following Aristotle's lead (*Metaphysics* 5.7 1017^a8–1017^b9), mediæval philosophers generally held that potency and act are divisions of being, just as the ten categories are an alternate division of being, and so is a basic metaphysical aspect of created beings. Thus the actualization of a potency does not constitute any sort of formal difference, since form is specific to the categorial division of being while potency and act are a distinct division of being. Therefore the internal articulation of potency and act will differ from that of categorial being, and it is to this articulation we now turn.

There are two main types of potency, passive potency and active potency. Passive potency is the power to undergo or receive some act or action, as for example to be informed by a form. Active potency, in contrast, is the power to do or perform some act or action. The content of each potency, whether passive or active, specifies the 'act' or actualization that is an actualization of the potency. Potencies are individuated by their corresponding acts, that is, by what counts as a determinate actualization of the potency. Distinct acts can be actualizations of one and the same potency, as the distinct activities of walking and running exercise the same more basic abilities involved in moving one's legs; one and the same act can be an actualization of different levels of potency, as the activity of singing a baritone aria is simultaneously an actualization of the potency to sing that aria, an actualization of the potency to sing, and an actualization of the potency to produce vocal sounds. (The two cases are not all that distinct: it may be that there is a set of basic powers, such as the ability to move one's legs and the capacity to produce vocal sound, which are involved in all other activities.) With these distinctions in mind, we can recast some of Bonaventure's claims canvassed in §4.

Matter is in its essence a purely passive potency, that is, the bare potency to be informed by any form whatsoever: any form at all would count as an actualization of matter. As purely passive potency, matter cannot be actual, since this would imply some determinate actualization. However, this essential characteristic of matter as purely passive potency does not exclude or preclude matter actually existing; matter is not destroyed when its potencies are actualized, just as a singer does not lose her ability to sing when actually singing. In this sense, matter or potency is a principle of all created being, since every created being is and must be an actualization of such essentially passive indeterminate potency.³⁷ For the very same reason,

³⁷ God's initial creation, then, must have been to establish the existence of a new meta-

namely that every created being is and must be a determinate actualization of potency, form or act must equally be a principle of all created being. Neither can be ultimately prior to the other in creatures, since they are interdefined.

The individuality of an individual is due to the appropriation and indivision of the intrinsic principles of form and matter: when the form is or becomes the form of this matter and when the matter is or becomes the matter for this form, and the ‘appropriated’ form and matter are unified. The initial difficulty, posed in §3, was that this account seems to be question-begging, since it requires the individuality of the form and the individuality of the matter prior to explaining the individuality of the composite. The wax-example suggested that the problem of individuation should be treated as having three component parts: how form can actualize the potencies of matter without itself being individualized, how matter can give existence to the form without itself being individualized, how the actual conjunction of non-individualized matter and non-individualized form produces a determinate individual. The first two depend on the relation of form and matter understood as act and potency; the last, the ultimate ground of the preceding two, on the difference between local and global explanations of individuation.³⁸

Form actualizes the potencies latent in matter, whether active or passive. Put another way, the matter that is to be the matter for the form must already possess a potency for the form. This requirement is non-trivial; not all matter is immediately equipped to be the matter for a given form—the matter of Socrates is not immediately fit to be informed by the form

physical feature of being, namely potency. (It is ‘new’ since there is no potency in God, only act.) God’s next creation was to establish the relation between potency and act. It is only at this point that God could create matter as a metaphysically basic form of potency, namely passive potency for any actualization, and so establish the metaphysical principles of all created being. Note that by ‘created being’ I do not mean only the beings actually created by God, but such possible beings as Socrates’s twin brother. Once these principles are in place, then the more ordinary process of creating actual beings structured by these principles can occur. Of course, these ‘stages’ are logical rather than temporal; to say that God creates *ex nihilo*— is simply to maintain that all these stages occur simultaneously, though some are logically prior to others.

³⁸ By a ‘local’ explanation of individuation I mean an explanation of the individuality of an individual in terms of proximate principles or causes of that individuality. These principles or causes may also require individuation. A ‘global’ explanation of individuality identifies principles or causes (either proximate or remote) that do *not* require individuation. Global explanations entail local explanations, but the converse does not hold.

of a wine-glass, for example, although his matter could be broken down far enough into its constituents so that this might be possible. Thus the matter that is to be the matter of the form is already structured as required by the form, and hence must in some sense already contain the form, at least in potency. In the case of living creatures, the form is contained virtually by way of a *ratio seminalis*.³⁹ That is, the organic matter destined to be the matter of Socrates possesses the active potency to develop into a body informed by rationality (and hence a composite informed by the species *man*), and in standard conditions it will do so unless prevented. The active potency of organic matter is not a potency for an individual form, since there are no individual forms, but is rather a potency for specific form; it is not the potency for *Socrateity* but for *man*. Yet just as the generic active potency to sing which is present in a singer may be actualized by singing a baritone aria, so too the generic active potency for man present in some organic matter is actualized by vivifying the organic matter with rational life, and this is precisely what it is for Socrates to exist. Socrates is no more than the actualization of the generic or specific active potency of given organic matter; since actualization does not constitute any formal difference, there need be no individual form *Socrateity*.⁴⁰ This actualization is due either to the operation of natural agency, which reduces the potencies to act, or by the presence of standard conditions and the absence of impediments,

³⁹ This is true for all living creatures except man, whose soul is directly created by God rather than educed from a *ratio seminalis* in the way in which, say, the soul of Brunellus the Ass is virtually contained in the *ratio seminalis*; see II *Sent.* d. 19 art. 1 q. 2 *ad* 3 (Bonaventure discusses non-rational animate creatures in II *Sent.* d. 15 art. 1 q. 1). Aside from recognizing the nobility of man, this provides a philosophical basis for distinguishing the mortal souls of irrational creatures and the immortal souls of rational creatures: the former have souls that are only the actualization of the determinate matter of the animal's body, and so perish with the dissolution of the body, but the latter have souls that are not as closely tied to matter, being directly created by God, and so are capable of having some act that is not the act of any bodily organ and which can therefore survive bodily dissolution. (The non-bodily 'act' in question is the act of understanding, and the powers of the rational soul, as distinguished from the vegetative or nutritive soul, in particular.) I will simply ignore this theological complication, and treat Socrates and Brunellus in the same fashion.

⁴⁰ Note that this claim depends on the proviso expressed in the preceding note, since it entails that the difference of souls is a corollary of the difference of the matter they actualize. This is true for non-rational animate creatures, though not for humans. Note also that while this claim is true of the relation between the species and the individual, it may also be applied to the relation between the genus and the species in like manner: the actualization of the species also counts as the determinate actualization of the genus. The genus and the species do differ formally, so the converse need not hold for a particular species.

which is sufficient for a *ratio seminalis* to be actualized. Form gives *esse* to matter by being the actualization of its latent potencies. Therefore, form may actualize the determinate specific potencies latent in matter without itself being individualized.

So stated, there seems to be an obvious objection. The actualization engendered by the generic or specific form seems to presuppose the individuality of the matter—a determinate subject with certain latent potencies—and so the individuality of the matter itself stands in need of further explanation. Yet while the objection has some force, it is too strong. Bonaventure will argue that the actualization carried out by the form does not require the individuality of the matter, but only its capacity to be informed, as a being in potency or ‘stuff.’ Let us examine the details of his account more closely.

The matter entering into the composite, before it is informed, retains the characteristics of a being in potency, not possessing determinate actuality. More accurately, it does not possess the determinate actuality given it by that form which is to inform it. This need not preclude the matter possessing actuality from other forms, imperfect or incomplete *esse*, which is nonetheless sufficient for spatio-temporal location. If we imagine organic matter organized into the structure of a human body, although not yet informed, then there is as yet no ‘individuality’ to the matter: it is not a *per se* being, but a mere accidental unity, a collection of organic parts. That such an uninformed body is not a unity is shown by its speedy dissolution. The parts may have local unity, as shown by the fact that they are distinguished into blood, bones, flesh, organs, and the like, which allow the ‘body’ to have determinate spatio-temporal location, but in the absence of the soul these are temporary and partial unities. Put another way, there is something arbitrary about singling out any matter as the matter of the form in the absence of that form which gives the matter complete *esse*. The same point emerges with more clarity if we consider a lump of wax shaped into not one but two distinct seals. Prior to being informed, the wax is no more one than two, and there is no way to distinguish its parts, since the potency to be shaped into a seal is homogeneously present throughout. If the lump of wax is first divided so that there are two lumps distinct by spatio-temporal location, and then each lump receives the form of a different seal, the two lumps of wax are still one by the unity of homogeneity or continuity. This example shows that the individuality or unity of matter is relative to form, and that with respect to a given form matter functions as a ‘stuff’ rather than as an individual, even if the same matter possesses other forms with

respect to which it is a concrete unity.⁴¹ Matter is a 'stuff' by its nature since it is in potency, awaiting the determinate actualization given by the form. Hence when form actualizes the potencies latent within the matter, that matter is a 'stuff' with respect to the form rather than an individual. Thus form does not presuppose the individuality of matter (quite the opposite), and the non-individuality of matter with respect to the form does not preclude the matter giving spatio-temporal location to the form.⁴²

Therefore, generic form and stufflike matter account for the individuality of a composite of form and matter. Form is not individual, but possessed generically (and perhaps virtually) in the potencies of matter, and the actualization of such potencies gives *esse* to the matter. Equally, the matter is not individual as regards the form in question, but an indeterminate stuff that may nevertheless have spatio-temporal location (and other characteristics as well) such that its potencies can be actualized and the form given existence and location.

Bonaventure's solution to the problem of individuation, then, is a 'local' explanation of individuality. It explains the individuality of any given individual by recourse to potency and act. It is possible, in the case of any given individual, locally to explain the individuality of that individual. The explanation, citing the intrinsic principles of matter and form, will have recourse to logically and perhaps temporally prior entities that themselves may be individual composites of matter and form. The individuality of Socrates is due to Socrates being a composite of *this* form in *this* matter. That Socrates has *this* form is a consequence of the determinate generic potencies possessed by a lump of extrinsically individuated matter localizing the form; that Socrates has *this* matter is a consequence of the *esse* given to a lump of matter by the actualization of its potencies. The possession of a determinate generic potency, such as the potency to be informed by *man* rather than *ass*, and the localization of one form rather than the other in space and time, depends on the characteristics already possessed by the 'lump' of matter: to have the potency for *man* rather than *ass* the 'lump' must be an organized and structured collection of legs, arms, hands, and the like, or at least the nutritive and developmental collection of abilities

⁴¹ In II *Sent.* d. 15 art. 1 q. 2 *ad* 4 Bonaventure writes that "the later and more posterior the form, the more noble it is, for those [composites] anterior to it are material with respect to the posterior" (*antiora sunt materialia respectu posteriorum*).

⁴² Note that individuality cannot derive from the spatial location of the composite or of the matter itself, for, as noted above, 'place' is defined only relative to an existent individual according to aristotelian doctrine. The consequences of this doctrine for Bonaventure's theory will be explored in the rest of this section.

possessed by the zygote or embryo; the possession of the given potencies will determine which forms can be put into act. Hence the individuality of Socrates depends on the characteristics of an individual complex composite of form and matter, one in potency to further actualization.

Bonaventure's explanation of individuality is therefore local: the individuality of any composite of form and matter is explained through the characteristics of prior individual composites of form and matter. The individuality of these prior composites is itself not explained but assumed for the purposes of the explanation. Now given that the same question can be raised with regard to these prior composites, can Bonaventure's account be extended to explain the individuality of all individuals at once—that is, can it serve as a 'global' or general explanation of individuation?

The answer is that it cannot. There is no global explanation of individuality. Bonaventure's account of individuality, when applied to particular cases, will identify the particular principles which are involved in that case; the unity of the individual can be explained by reference to other individuals and the mechanism of potency and act. If we ask why this individual exists rather than another, or indeed why any individual exists at all, a local explanation in terms of natural agency is possible. Socrates exists because of the potencies and forms latent in organic matter, which themselves are the result of his parents' causal activity, and so forth. This kind of response can be extremely detailed, as the sketch of Bonaventure's account of the physical world in §4 has shown. Yet ultimately the reason for the existence of any individual depends on direct divine agency: God created corporeal matter and informed it with certain potencies. Likewise, the individuality of any individual is ultimately the result of direct divine agency: God initially structured being through potency and act. The individuality of any individual can be explained only in terms of the individuality of other individuals prior to it. The explanation given for this is a matter of the detailed causal relations of generation. The classical problem of individuation *is* the problem of existence—at least, insofar as the problem of individuation can be given sense at all, and is not simply confused.⁴³

⁴³ So stated, there seems to be an obvious counterexample: non-actual possible individuals, such as Socrates's merely possible twin brother. But it is not clear that this is a genuine counterexample, for even merely possible beings are described as having some degree of relative actualization of material potencies. Socrates's merely possible twin brother *would be* an actuality of the potencies latent in given bones, flesh, and so on, and his individuality may be explained in terms of such. This example shows that, strictly speaking, real existence is not required for individuality. Alternatively, Bonaventure might deny that there are any merely possible individuals; his discussion

Therefore, Bonaventure takes the classical problem of individuation to depend on deeper metaphysical and theological truths about potency and act. His denial of the possibility of what I have called a 'global' explanation does not vitiate any of the local explanations that may be given. If we ask what makes Socrates to be the very thing he is, the answer is that it is his intrinsic principles of matter and form. If we ask what makes Socrates to be the kind of thing he is, the answer is that it is his form, an answer that does not commit Bonaventure to the existence of universal forms (other than as individualized actualizations of material potencies)—and to be 'his' form, the form *man* is actualized in matter, so matter is and must be part of this answer. If we ask what makes Socrates distinct from others of the same kind, the answer is that it is his matter—and to be 'his' matter, the stufflike matter has to be actualized by form, and so form is and must be part of this answer. Bonaventure's insistence on the necessity of both of the principles of form and matter in explaining individuation reveals the limitations of other accounts which only identify one factor as responsible for individuality.

To put the point sharply, Bonaventure denies that the 'problem of individuation,' understood as the quest for a single principle or cause which explains the individuality of every individual, has a solution. But his denial goes deeper than that. Bonaventure holds that there *could not be* any principle or cause accounting for the individuality of every individual, and that to search for one is a sign of confusion—a conflation of distinct problems, each of which has an answer, into a single confused problem that could not have any answer. There cannot be any 'global' or general account of individuation, because individuality is a metaphysically relative feature of the world. What it is to be individual depends on the relative position a thing occupies in the series of potencies and their correlative actualizations, how a given parcel of 'stuff' has a sufficiently high degree of local organization relative to other stuffs that it may be called 'individual.'

An analogy will clarify these points. Consider the difference between an absolute theory of space, in which a position in terms of an independent framework can be specified for any or all beings, and a relative theory of space, in which the position of any being depends on the position of all other beings. The relative theory of space allows only a local account of the position of any being, namely how the given being is related to other beings. There is no independent framework in terms of which the position of all beings could be specified. The general request for the position of a

of the status of that which God conceives before creation suggests this.

being independently of its relations to other beings makes no sense on a relative theory of space; to demand an account of the position of a being independently of all other beings is simply confused. There is no ‘absolute’ or ‘global’ answer to this question, since the kind of explanation generated by the relative theory of space does not permit the question to be formulated. (Other than as a question receiving the somewhat trivial answer that spatial position exists because God created beings with relative situation, that is.) The lack of an answer to such a question is not an epistemic fact, but a metaphysical one—if the world is such that space is constituted only relatively, then no ‘global’ account of position in terms of an independent framework is possible.

So too with Bonaventure’s theory of individuation. The demand for an independent framework of principles or causes in terms of which the individuality of the individual can be explained without reference to other individuals is simply confused; Bonaventure holds a local or ‘relative’ rather than a global or ‘absolute’ theory of individuation, and the question cannot be formulated. (Other than as a question receiving the somewhat trivial answer that individuals exist because God created beings structured by potency and act, that is.) The lack of any answer is not epistemic but metaphysical: individuality is constituted by the relative degree of actualization of the potencies of a being. All beings are combinations of potency and act, but the relevance of this fact to the problem of individuation has been obscured by the misleading character of the statement of the problem.

In its general form there can be no solution to the problem of individuation. However, Bonaventure does not dismiss it as a pseudo-problem, because it includes three genuine subproblems, each of which is capable of solution: how to explain the unity of the individual, which is a result of the conjunction of form and matter; how an individual comes to be out of what is non-individual, which is initially given a local natural explanation but ultimately rests on supernatural agency; and how the individual is distinct from all else and known to be distinct—the subject of the next section.

6. Distinctness and Discernibility

When describing individuality as the result of the intrinsic principles of form and matter, Bonaventure says that “being discrete or being distinct from another is consequent upon this [conjunction of form and matter], and from this there arises number, and so an accidental property consequent upon substance” (II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 q. 2 *resp.*). The same point is made somewhat earlier: “it is possible [for matter] to be completed by form with regard to *esse*, by the advent of which there is constituted an individual

numerically one by actual and complete unity, from the advent of which there comes about distinctness, and multitude arises in things" (II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 1 q. 3 *ad* 2). Distinctness or discreteness is derived from the unity of the individual. Bonaventure gives us a clue how to interpret this rather cryptic claim in II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 q. 2 *ad* 6:⁴⁴

Just as accidental unity unavoidably follows from substantial unity, which is not a principle of indivision but consequent to it, so too number unavoidably follows from substantial diversity. Still, according to the thing and its nature, the distinction is from a substantial principle, not an accidental [principle].

In §§4–5 we have seen how the substantial unity of the individual is produced by the intrinsic principles of matter and form. Now it might be thought that 'unity' is an accidental property, falling under the category of Quality. But Bonaventure here draws a distinction: since 'one' is a transcendental term, like 'truth' and 'good,' each of which is on a par with the transcendental divisions of being like potency and act or the categorial division, it may correctly be applied across all the Aristotelian categories. When applied to items in the category of Substance, it denotes the unity of a *per se* being, and in particular cases the individuality of the individual.⁴⁵ The substantial unity produced by the conjunction of matter and form, then, is the foundation for the distinctness or discreteness of the individual, since in the appropriation of principles the form is or becomes the form of *this* matter and the matter is or becomes the matter for *this* form. The form and the matter are individualized through each other and appropriated to one another through their indivision; no other individual could have or possess these principles, since they are unique to their possessor. Therefore, substantial unity entails the distinctness or discreteness of the individual.

Substantial unity also brings in its train accidental unity, and thereby unity in the category of Quantity. The former claim, that substantial unity entails accidental unity, is Bonaventure's way of saying that accidents are individuated by the individual substances that possess them and that they characterize. He chooses this indirect way of stating his claim for two reasons. First, as noted in §2, accidents by definition cannot be 'individuals' in

⁴⁴ II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 q. 2 *ad* 6 (tom. II 107b): "Dicendum quod sicut unitatem substantialem consequitur unitas accidentaliter inseparabiliter, quae non est principium indivisionis sed consequens ad illam, sic diversitatem substantialem consequitur numerus inseparabiliter. Tamen secundum rem et naturam distinctio illa est a substantiali principio, non accidentali."

⁴⁵ The qualification 'in particular cases' is important, since non-individuals such as species and genera also have unity and can be described as beings *per se*.

the strict sense. Second, because numerically distinct accidents do not produce any numerical diversity in that in which they are present (III *Sent.* d. 6 art. 1 q. 1 *resp.*):⁴⁶

It is plain that those things of which one is predicated of the other are not distinguished from each other in number, although they are formally distinguished. For example, if “Peter is a musician” were stated, *Peter* and *musician* are not two, although there is a formal distinction between Peter and his music.

(To be ‘distinguished in number’ is for things to be numerically distinct, capable of being counted.) Accidents are formally distinguished but really identical in that in which they are present. Hence accidents have a kind of unity that derives from the unity of the substance in which they are present. The latter claim, that substantial unity thereby entails unity in the category of Quantity, is of special interest, because such unity is the principle of number (or of enumeration). Corporeal substances, which all have physical matter, have this sort of unity. Thus numerical identity and distinctness follows directly from the combination of matter and form. As Bonaventure says, being one and being distinct are derived from the same source.⁴⁷

The individualization of accidents by the substance in which they are present also explains how distinct individuals are discernible. As Bonaventure says in III *Sent.* d. 10 art. 1 q. 2 *resp.*, “it should be said that, putting aside all accidents and properties (which do not produce individuation but only display it), individuation is from intrinsic principles in that [such principles] constitute one supposit in which the whole *esse* of a thing is stabilized.” The distinctness of accidents is a guide to the distinctness of that in which the accidents are present: the accidents ‘display individuation.’ Typically, individuals are distinguished by sensing their distinct accidents (as recounted at length in the *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*), but this does not exclude a grasp of the principles from which such accidental differences flow. As Bonaventure says in II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 q. 2 *ad* 5, replying to an objection that his account is unworkable since we could never have

⁴⁶ III *Sent.* d. 6 art. 1 q. 1 *resp.* (tom. III 149b): “Planum enim est quod illa quorum unum de altero praedicatur invicem non numerantur, quamvis formaliter distinguantur. Utpote si dicatur ‘Petrus est musicus,’ musicus et Petrus non sunt duo, quamvis inter Petrum et musicam* suam sit distinctio.” [*The text reads *musicum*, which make no sense; given the context, it is likely a corruption of *musicam*.]

⁴⁷ In II *Sent.* d. 18 art. 2 q. 1 *resp.* Bonaventure explicitly grants arguments proving that souls are diverse; the third argument is: “ab eodem esse et esse unum sive esse distinctum; sed unumquodque habet esse a sua perfectione: ergo distinctionem.”

knowledge of the principles of matter and form, by the aristotelian slogan that “sensing is of particulars and understanding of universals”:⁴⁸

It should be said that although sense is only of singulars in a certain way, still, the understanding can be not only of universals but also of singulars. Accordingly, the difference [between sense and intellect] should not be understood with precision. This is clear, since only the intellect comprehends the intrinsic principles of Peter and of Plato. Putting aside all accidents, it declares them to be discrete and distinct.

The understanding can grasp the intrinsic principles of an individual, that is, the understanding can directly grasp the individuality of the individual. The mechanics of how the understanding is capable of so doing are extremely complex, but we need not enter on them here; it is sufficient to note that for Bonaventure the discernibility of individuals is due to their intrinsic individuality.

7. Conclusion

Bonaventure's insight into the dependence of questions about individuation on the more basic metaphysical division of being into potency and act gives his answer a depth which puts it far beyond other accounts of individuation and reveals their limitations. Whether in the last analysis Bonaventure's account of individuation is satisfactory is another issue altogether. The crucial theological premisses are not acceptable, or no longer as accepted as they once were, and it is not clear how much of his account could survive their rejection. Quite independent of theology, the mediæval understanding of modality as primarily a feature of subjects as well as the view that individuals are composites of form and matter are not in currency any longer. Bonaventure's account of individuation is so entwined in its theological and aristotelian roots that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to produce a modernized version of his theory that retained any fidelity in details. However, the philosophical merit of Bonaventure's ac-

⁴⁸ II *Sent.* d. 3 p. 1 art. 2 q. 2 *ad* 5 (tom. II 107b): “Dicendum quod etsi sensus solummodo sit singularium, intellectus tamen potest esse non solum universalium sed etiam singularium. Unde non est intelligenda illa differentia cum praecisione. Et hoc patet quia solus intellectus comprehendit intrinseca principia Petri et Platonis. Circumscriptis omnibus accidentibus, dicit eos esse discretos et distinctos.” To ‘understand with precision’ is a technical phrase, meaning that the understanding in question is taken to exclude the addition of further characteristics. Here, Bonaventure is making the point that to say *e. g.* that understanding is of universals does not positively exclude that it may be of singulars as well.

count of individuation does not reside solely in a wholesale translation into modern jargon. Neither is it only of antiquarian interest. Its real merit lies in the penetrating insights Bonaventure offers into how the traditional ‘problem of individuation’ involves and obscures more basic philosophical questions, and his suggestion that an account of a fundamentally different kind should be offered. The central intuition Bonaventure has to offer is that the world is composed of various kinds of ‘stuffs’ which occasionally have a sufficiently high degree of local organization such that some parcel of stuff can be called ‘individual.’ We may not accept his analysis, but the sophistication and complexity with which he develops this intuition challenge alternative mediæval and modern approaches alike. And that is, perhaps, Bonaventure’s true philosophical legacy.

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