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# St. Thomas' Principle of Individuation, Materia Quantitate Signata

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ST. THOMAS' PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUATION

MATERIA QUANTITATE SIGNATA

by

Joseph M. Loftus, O.S.M.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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## LIFE

Father Joseph M. Loftus, O.S.M. was born in Chicago, Illinois, November 9, 1921.

He was graduated from St. Philip High School, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1939. In September of the same year he entered the Servite Order as a postulant at Hillside, Illinois. The following September he entered the novitiate at Granville, Wisconsin. From September, 1941 to June, 1943, he studied philosophy at Hillside, Illinois. During the remainder of 1943 and until June, 1944, he taught English at St. Philip High School and attended Loyola University. In September, 1944, he started his theological studies at Stonebridge Priory, Lake Bluff, Illinois; he continued studying theology in Rome in 1946 and finished in 1948.

In December, 1947, he was ordained.

Since September, 1948, he has been engaged in teaching at Stonebridge Priory, Lake Bluff, Illinois.

He began his graduate studies in philosophy at Loyola University in June, 1949.

## PREFACE

Throughout the thesis translations from Latin works are the author's, unless name of the translator is given.

Very special thanks are due to Professor George Drury for his kind interest and his sagacious guidance. Thanks are due too to Stephen Ryan, O.S.M. for his diligent copy-reading and helpful suggestions.

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CHAPTER I  
ST. THOMAS' PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUATION  
AND THE VIEWS OF OTHER  
PHILOSOPHERS

This thesis attempts to present St. Thomas' explanation of the principle of individuation of corporeal substances of the same species. Identifying this principle as matter does not constitute a problem, but the interpretation of this principle has given rise to a number of conflicting opinions. The effort to recover the authentic doctrine of St. Thomas will require a careful reconstruction of the problem and an exact setting forth of his concept of prime matter. To these preparatory labors the second and third chapters of this thesis are respectively devoted. In chapter four the division of the commentators over the meaning of the qualifying phrase in St. Thomas' fuller expression of the principle of individuation as materia quantitate signata is presented. Chapter five proposes as a method for deciding between the views of Cajetan and Ferrara a reconstruction of the historical context to throw light on the meaning of the problem. The interpretation that quantity figures as a condition of matter in executing the function of individuation having been adopted, chapter six deals with the corrolary question of whether quantity is determined or undetermined in its dimensions. Chapter seven shows the harmony between St. Thomas' theory of individuation and his thought on prime matter, the unicity of the substantial

form, and the eduction of material forms from prime matter. The rest of the present chapter gives a summary account of the sources of St. Thomas' teaching on the principle of individuation and the views which before, during or since his time agree or disagree with his teaching.

No one acquainted with Thomism seriously contests the fact that St. Thomas held matter as the principle of individuation. He says it plainly in all his works, first and last, and in a variety of contexts whenever the question arises. So that no one make capital of an isolated phrase and misinterpret St. Thomas as Godfrey de Fontaines did Aristotle's "actus est qui distinguit",<sup>1</sup> let us examine the continuity of St. Thomas' thought.

In De Natura Materiae the title of the second chapter enunciates that "matter is the principle of individuation."<sup>2</sup> The opusculum De Principio Individuationis declares that "it is easy to see how matter is the principle of individuation."<sup>3</sup>

There is some doubt that the works just mentioned are actually St. Thomas'. Dr. Bourke lists them as rejected by Mandonnet, who incorporates them into the "Opuscula Spuria."<sup>4</sup> According to Mandonnet De Natura Materiae

1 Henri Renard, S.J., The Philosophy of Being, Bruce, 2nd ed., Milwaukee, 1946, 226.

2 St. Thomas Aquinas, Opuscula Omnia, ed. Peter Mandonnet, O.P., Lethielleux, Paris, 1927, V, Op. LII, II, 199.

3 St. Thomas, Opuscula Omnia, V, Op. LI, 195.

4 Vernon J. Bourke, Thomistic Bibliography, ed. The Modern Schoolman, St. Louis, 1945, 19.



is absent from the so called official catalogue.<sup>5</sup> Roland-Gosselin doubts its genuineness because of the doctrinal content.<sup>6</sup> Mandonnet doubts too the authenticity of De Principio Individuationis, despite the fact that Cajetan identifies it as a part of St. Thomas' original De Potentiis Cognoscitivis, preserved in the Vatican Library Collection.<sup>7</sup>

In opposition to Mandonnet, Grabmann credits both of these works to St. Thomas.<sup>8</sup> He and Michelitsch point out that De Natura Materiae can be found in the book catalogue of Ptolomy of Luca and has been declared genuine in manuscripts of Bruges, Avignon, Bordeaux, Paris, and Oxford. There are manuscripts in the Vatican, in Bruges, Paris, and other libraries that actually name St. Thomas as the author of De Principio Individuationis.<sup>9</sup>

Dubious authenticity of these opuscula does not shake St. Thomas' teaching of the radical basis of individuation. In other opuscula he states categorically that this is matter's function. In Librum Boetii de Trinitate he says "through the matter is caused a numerical diversity in the same species."<sup>10</sup> In a different context, speaking of essence as found in composite substances, he says in De Ente et Essentia: "matter is the principle of

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5 Robert Joseph Slavin, O.P., The Philosophical Basis for Individual Differences According to St. Thomas Aquinas, Doctoral Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1936, 23.

6 Ibid.

7 Thomas de Vio, Cajetan, De Ente et Essentia, M. H. Laurent, O.P., Marietti, Turin, 1934, II, V, 55.

8 Martin Grabmann, Thomas Aquinas, trans. V. Michel, O.S.F., Longmans, Green, and Co., New York, 1928, 21.

9 Slavin, Philosophical Basis, 59.

10 St. Thomas, Opuscula Omnia, III, Op. XVI, Q.4, A.2, 85.

individuation."<sup>11</sup>

St. Thomas' contention that matter is the root of individuation isn't simply thrown into his synthesis as an addendum. It is woven into his opera magna as an integral part of his system. Speaking about angels in the second book of his commentary on the Sentences, St. Thomas says that no form or nature is multiplied except through matter.<sup>12</sup> In Contra Gentiles, contrasting God's essence with material essences, he says that they are "individualized according to the definite matter of this or that individual."<sup>13</sup> Later in another book of the same work he states: "Difference in point of form begets difference of species, while difference in point of matter begets difference in number."<sup>14</sup> In the Summa Theologica, his final work, St. Thomas doesn't depart from the opinion he had expressed so often previously. To round out the case for matter's role let us consider these excerpts: "Forms which can be received in matter are individuated by matter."<sup>15</sup> "Things which

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11 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, Armand Augustine Maurer, C.S.B., The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Canada, 1949, 51.

12 St. Thomas, Super Liber Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi, P. Mandonnet, O.P., Parisiis, ed. 6th, P. Lethielleux, 1929, II, Dist. 3, Ques., 1, Art. 4, 97.

13 St. Thomas, Summa Contra Gentiles, abridg. trans. Of God and His Creatures, Joseph Rickaby, S.J., The Carroll Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1950, Bk. I, Ch. 21, 3, 16.

14 St. Thomas, Summa Cont. Gent., II, 93, 2, 173.

15 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, Part I, Ques. 11, Art. 3, common. Unless stated otherwise reference to the Summa is to Anton C. Pegis' Basis Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Random House, N.Y.

agree in species but differ in number agree in form but are distinguished materially."<sup>16</sup>

From what St. Thomas writes, it is patent that in his philosophy matter performed the function of individuation. Equally clear is the fact that his teaching was recognized in his own time. There was no objection to his evaluation of matter's role in individuating material forms, but what of immaterial forms? St. Thomas seemed to say that God cannot multiply individual angels within the same species because there is in them no material composition. He was limiting God's omnipotence. Consequently his whole doctrine of individuation was condemned by Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, in May, 1277. Afterwards at Oxford he was censured on the same grounds by a member of his own order, Robert Kilwardby, Bishop of Canturbury. Of course, the condemnations were later rescinded and St. Thomas completely exonerated from suspicions of heresy.

By contrast it is interesting to note that St. Thomas' teaching on the individuation of material substances was among the theses proposed to the Sacred Congregation of Studies after Pius X in a Motu Proprio, on June 29, 1914, prescribed that all schools of philosophy teach and hold the main points of the doctrine of St. Thomas. Masters of institutes submitted the theses to clarify Pius' "main points." The Congregation examined them,

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16 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, Q, 50, A. 4, c.

approved, and referred them to the Holy Father. At his instance the Congregation proclaimed that these theses contained clearly the main points of Thomism. Thesis eleven of the twenty-four enunciated:<sup>17</sup> "Matter, signed by quantity, is the principle of individuation, that is, of numerical distinction (which cannot be in pure spirits) of one individual from another in the same specific nature."

Though St. Thomas' thought on the individuation of substances, in its entirety, startled the philosophical world of his time, using matter as the principle of individuation of material substances was neither novel nor unique.

In its broad outlines, St. Thomas borrowed the theory from Aristotle.<sup>18</sup> A glance at the Philosopher shows that he fathered St. Thomas' thought on this problem.

In the fifth book of the Metaphysics, after marking the various usages of the term "one," Aristotle says that "in number those are one whose matter is one." He exemplifies: "Things that are one in number are also one in species, while things that are one in species are not all one in number."<sup>19</sup>

17 Edouard Hugon, Principes de Philosophie, Les Vingt-Quatre Theses Thomistes, Paris, Pierre Toqui, 1922, 76.

18 Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy, The Newman Bookshop, Westminster, Maryland, 1946, I, 308.

19 Aristotle, Metaphysics, V, 6, (1016b 32 -1017a 7), Richard McKeon, Random House, New York, 1941. Reference to Aristotle is to this edition unless otherwise stated.

Things are many "because their matter -either proximate matter or the ultimate- is divisible in kind." Commenting upon this text St. Thomas puts it clearly: "Those things are one whose matter is one. Indeed matter as it stands under signed dimensions is the principle of individuation of the form. And because of this a thing has from matter that it is one in number and divided from others."<sup>20</sup> Here St. Thomas indicates that he recognizes Aristotle's principle of individuation, agrees with it, and makes it more definite.

This text isn't singular. The same affinity appears again in the seventh book of the Metaphysics. Aristotle says: "This is Callias or Socrates; and they are different in virtue of their matter (for that is different), but the same in form; for their form is indivisible."<sup>21</sup> St. Thomas echoes him: "Every species that is in matter, in this flesh and bones, is something singular, as Callias and Socrates ... because of diversity of matter, which diversity is the principle of diversity of individuals in the same species."<sup>22</sup>

In the Physics where Aristotle observes that matter obviates the difficulties of the earlier philosophers in explaining generation and corruption,<sup>23</sup> St. Thomas in his commentary interpolates "and the plurality of things differing substantially."<sup>24</sup>

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20 St. Thomas, In Metaphysicam Aristotelis, M.R. Cathala, O.P., Marietti, Turin, 1926, V, 8, n. 876, 282.

21 Aristotle, Metaphysics, VII, 8, (1034a 6), 795.

22 St. Thomas, In Metaphysicam, VII, 7, 11435, 421.

23 Aristotle, Physics, I, 8, (191b 30), 234.

24 St. Thomas, Opera Omnia, Leo XIII, In Octo Libros Physicorum Aristotelis, Roma, Polyglotta, 1884, Cap. VIII, Lect. XIV, 50.

In De Spiritualibus Creaturis St. Thomas uses the negative aspect of material individuation. If matter is the principle of individuation, "... inasmuch as it has not the natural capacity of being received in something else," then it follows that a given form "... which is not able to be received in something has individuation from this very fact, because it cannot exist in many, but remains in itself by itself."<sup>25</sup> Comparing angelic forms with Plato's Ideas, he points to Aristotle's argument that if the forms of things are abstracts, they must be singular.<sup>26</sup>

Other major philosophers before and during St. Thomas' era named matter as the basis of individuation. Copleston claims that the Arabians in some way made matter the principle of individuation. Avicenna explains that for the reception of one particular specific form, prime matter has to be taken out of its state of indetermination and disposed for the reception of the form, first through the form of corporeity and then through the activity of external causes that effect individuation.<sup>27</sup> Averroes seems to cast matter in the same role when he says that God educes forms from prime matter, which is coeternal with Him.<sup>28</sup>

Contemporaneous with Aquinas, St. Bonaventure concedes matter an important place in individuation. Appraising St. Bonaventure's use of matter

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<sup>25</sup> St. Thomas, On Spiritual Creatures, trans. Mary C. Fitzpatrick and John J. Wellmuth, S.J., Marquette U. Press, Milwaukee, 1949, Art. V, ad 8, 72.

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle, Metaphysics, VII, 13, (1039a 30), 806.

<sup>27</sup> Copleston, S.J., Hist. of Phil., II, 193.

<sup>28</sup> Copleston, S.J., Hist. of Phil., II, 198.

Professor Gilson says there is only a difference of terminology in St. Thomas and the head of the Franciscan School.<sup>29</sup> He bases his opinion upon this passage:

Si tamen quaeras, a quo veniat principaliter; dicendum, quod individuum est hoc aliquid. Quod sit hoc, principalium 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.<sup>30</sup>

Evidently realizing that he is confusing individuation with individuality when he identifies St. Bonaventure's thought with St. Thomas', Professor Gilson later clarifies by concluding that St. Bonaventure's "individuation is effected by the reciprocal appropriation of matter and form."<sup>31</sup> With this view of Bonaventure, Fr. Copleston agrees: "... individuation arises from the actual union of matter and form, which appropriate one another through their union," like wax and a seal.<sup>32</sup> Still there is a marked similarity in the two doctrines. It becomes less marked in the psychological realm where St. Bonaventure endows souls with a spiritual matter to allow for numerical difference apart from the bodies they inform. We will consider this and its implications in a subsequent Chapter.

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29 Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, trans. A.H.C. Downes, Scribner's, New York, 1936, 464.

30 St. Bonaventure, Opera Omnia, Bernardini a Portu Romatino, Collegio S. Bonaventurae, Quaracchi, 1885, II, Dist. III, Pars I, Art. II, Quaest. III, Conclusio, 110. Italics St. Bonaventure's.

31 Etienne Gilson, The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure, trans. Dom Iltyd Trethowan and F. J. Sheed, Sheed & Ward, New York, 1938, 306.

32 Copleston, S.J., History of Philosophy, II, 272.

Albert the Great, Alexander of Hales, Roger Bacon and others are said to have held matter, with more or less reservation, as the principle of individuation. However, the teaching is by no means universal among scholastic, old or new.<sup>33</sup>

Duns Scotus, as subtle here as usual, applies his distinctio formalis ex natura rei to explain that each individual has besides the common nature a haecceitas (thisness) which determines each individual being to be this being. Such individuation doesn't satisfy Thomists because it involves the gossamer distinction they can't put their minds on, and it leaves unexplained how the "thisness" is individuated.<sup>34</sup>

Occam - Nominalists in general - Aureolus, Durandus, and, later, Suarez agree that every entity is in itself the principle of its individuation. This is a facile solution, but Thomists see it as merely the enunciation of the problem. They would go farther and ask why the entity of an individual is this entity.

Another variation from St. Thomas' theme is Godfrey de Fontaines' plan of having form serve as the principle of individuation. Form individuating form constitutes a rather tight little circle, too vicious for Thomists' stomachs.

In the same vein Rosmini sees individuation in an act of existence, universals being non-existent but possibly existent things. His answer is

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33 Renard, S.J., Philosophy of Being, 227.

34 Renard, S.J., Philosophy of Being, 225.



only partial. There remains: What makes the individual intrinsically possible?<sup>35</sup>

This cursory presentation of St. Thomas' and alternate views leads to the fuller and more exact delineation of the problem of individuation which is the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>35</sup> Charles Boyer, S.J., Cursus Philosophiae, Desclee, Paris, 1937, I, 484.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROBLEM OF THE INDIVIDUATION OF CORPOREAL SUBSTANCES

This thesis is concerned with St. Thomas' explanation of the principle of individuation of corporeal substances of the same species. To put the problem plainly: "Why is this individual this individual and not another?"<sup>1</sup> We are not concerned with the difference between ham and eggs. Clearly ham and eggs are specifically diverse. But we are certainly interested in the difference between one ham and another. They do not differ in so far as they are ham, because if hamness were the basis of their differing from each other, we would have to conclude that one is not ham or that they are identical. Either conclusion is obviously wrong. Since both are hams, their specific nature, hamness, accounts not for their difference but for their similarity.<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas says it this way: if this ham were this ham because it is ham, then all hams would be this ham, and as a result there couldn't be many hams, but only one.<sup>3</sup> No one questions that there are many hams, so the reason for the this must be something besides the specific

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1 Renard, S.J., Philosophy of Being, 216.

2 Ibid.

3 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, Q. 11, A. 3, c. St. Thomas uses "Socrates" and "man". The writer of this thesis substitutes "ham" to indicate that the thesis is on a cosmological rather than a psychological level.

nature. What it is represents St. Thomas' solution to the problem of individuation.

His solution is important to an understanding of his philosophy because the philosophy of Aquinas, as Slavin points out, is not made up of isolated doctrines but forms an integrated whole with one doctrine presuming another and one teaching subordinated to another.<sup>4</sup> He goes on to show that an appreciation of individual differences demands an understanding of the principle of individuation. The grasp of St. Thomas' thought on individuation tests a person's knowledge of matter and form. Gerrity explains why: "because a misunderstanding of St. Thomas' teaching on individuation implies (as either cause or effect) a misunderstanding of his conception of primary matter, and probably of substantial form."<sup>5</sup> There is also an intimate connection between St. Thomas' theory of individuation and his thought on the universality of intellection. Wall sees one problem as the inversion of the other. "Why," he asks "is it that we never attain perfect union with the singular objects of our understanding? If we reverse our point of view and ask the question with the emphasis on the nature of bodies, I think we have the question of the principle of individuation as St. Thomas understood it."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Joseph Slavin, O.P., The Philosophical Basis for Individual Differences according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctoral Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1936, p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> Benignus Gerrity, F.S.C., The Theory of Matter and Form And the Theory of Knowledge in the Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctoral Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1936, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph B. Wall, "St. Thomas on Individuation," The Modern Schoolman, XVIII, March, 1941, 42.

Some of the most characteristic elements of Thomistic psychology, for example, the unknowability of matter, abstraction, the need of the active intellect, the intellectual knowledge of the singular, depend in part upon a preliminary knowledge of St. Thomas' principle of individuation.

Explanation of the numerical multiplicity of members of the same species challenges every philosophy. Some fall at this barrier, e.g., Platonism. Since the time of Aristotle, discussions and endless controversies dot the history of the problem. Not even Thomism can claim an unanimous interpretation of St. Thomas' position. The tendency is to tag the question one of the most difficult, call it subtle, and pass on. The question is difficult, but St. Thomas did not simply pass on. He says a good deal about the principle of individuation in various places. Nowhere does he suggest that he has not solved the problem to his own satisfaction. As a matter of fact, Wall thinks "he treats this question which in the schools is considered subtle and difficult, as simple, even obvious."<sup>7</sup>

Our object is not to prolong polemic discussions among Thomists but to reconsider the words of St. Thomas and investigate his writings in the light of what was happening philosophically in his day. In this way we distill the thought of St. Thomas from the mass of verbiage that obfuscates it in controversial writings.

Much of the subtlety disappears when we have a boldfaced knowledge of the problem. Knowing what we are looking for lightens the search.

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7 Ibid., 41.

At the start, it must be noted that we are here considering the principle of individuation of material substances only. That, of course, eliminates angels. Created intellectual substances, "their act of existing is other than their essence, although their essence is immaterial."<sup>8</sup> Angels "are limited as to their act of existing which they receive from above, but they are unlimited from below because their forms are not limited to the capacity of some matter receiving them."<sup>9</sup> Each individual angel exhausts his species so that each is specifically as well as numerically different from the next. Specific difference lies in "their degree of perfection in proportion as they withdraw from potentiality and approach pure act," that is, as they are more or less like God.

Since we exclude angels from the scope of this problem, a fortiori we exclude God. A form that cannot be received in matter, but is self-subsisting, is individuated precisely because it cannot be received in a subject.<sup>10</sup> Said of angels, this applies preeminently to God. As the First Cause, purely and simply the act of existing, He is individualized by His supreme perfection.<sup>11</sup>

What of human souls? As subsistent substances, they too are excluded from our consideration, except when they are understood as actually inform-

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8 St. Thomas Aquinas, On Being and Essence, Armand Augustine Maurer, C.S.B., The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Canada, 1949, 51.

9 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, 51.

10 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, q.3, a.2, ad 3.

11 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, 53.

ing a body. St. Thomas' explanation of how souls separated from bodies by death remain independent entities depends entirely upon his individuation of men, of whom the souls were formal principles.

Although the soul's individuation depends on the body for the occasion of its beginning since it comes into possession of its individuated act of existing only in the body of which it is the act, it is not necessary that the individuation come to an end when the body is removed. Since its act of existing is independent, once made the form of this particular body, that act of existing always remains individuated.<sup>12</sup>

St. Thomas explains that this is so because the soul is a unique form, the most perfect of natural forms, having a being of its own. It communicates this being, as form, to the matter, so that the being of the whole composite is also the being of the soul.<sup>13</sup> It subsists retaining its proper being when separated from the body, having an aptitude and a natural inclination to be united to the body." He exemplifies: "just as a light body remains light, when removed from its proper place, retaining meanwhile an aptitude and an inclination for its proper place."<sup>14</sup>

In deleting spiritual substances from the scope of our question, it is necessary to observe that we are striking out just the "spiritual" not the "substance." Though we are not occupied with spiritual substances, we are vitally interested in substances, material substances. One ham may differ

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12 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, 52.

13 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 76, art. 1, ad 6.

14 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 76, art. 1, ad 6.

from another, or one rose from the next because it has a different shape, occupies a different place, and so on through the legendary "forma, figura, locus, tempus, stirps, patria, nomen," which no two things can share in the same degree. Quite true. But form, figure, place and the rest are accidents that are not the ultimate constituents of individuation, but rather manifestations of an individual substance. In a certain special way the individual belongs to the genus of substance, according to St. Thomas:

For substance is individuated through itself, whereas the accidents are individuated by the subject, which is the substance. For this particular whiteness is called this because it exists in this particular subject. And so it is reasonable that the individuals of the genus substance should have a special name of their own; for they are called hypostases, or first substances.<sup>15</sup>

St. Thomas is careful to repeat in considerations of every type of being that accidents are no more than signs of substantial difference. Distinguishing between the angelic essence and its powers he notes that accidents following species belong to the form.<sup>16</sup> With souls it is the same: they are distinguished from their powers.<sup>17</sup> He draws a proportion: the power of a soul is to the soul itself as accidental forms are to the substantial form.<sup>18</sup> Accidents, however, belong to the composite as does

15 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 29, art. 1, c.

16 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 54, art. 3, ad 1.

17 St. Thomas, Sent. I, Dist. VIII, Quest. 5, Art. 2, ad 4.

18 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 77, art. 1, ad 3.

being, which the composite has through the substantial form.<sup>19</sup> Distinguishing between the quiddity and accidents of individuals as respective objects of intellect and senses, the difference between substance and its manifestations is again indicated.<sup>20</sup> Where St. Thomas does not make the observation that accidents are individuated by substance, not vice-versa, enthusiastic copyists incorporated marginal glosses into later copies of his works, e.g. in De Principiis Naturae Pauson omits Mandonnet's "indeed the subject gives esse to the accident, namely existence, because the accident does not have esse except through the subject" as an interpolation.<sup>21</sup>

Though St. Thomas asserts that nothing prevents us from sometimes substituting accidents for substantial differences, because "substantial forms, which in themselves are unknown to us, are known by their accidents,"<sup>22</sup> such a substitution here would be misleading. Despite the fact that the terms we use are just accidental to the concepts signified,<sup>23</sup> we must underline our objective. We are searching for the root of individuation, not exhibitions of the individual. Accidental differences are not the answer, because an "accident, by its union with its subject, does not cause the act of existing in which the thing subsists, rendering the thing a substantial being."<sup>24</sup> Our principle of individuation must be something substantial.

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19 Ibid.

20 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 85, art. 7, c.

21 Vernon J. Bourke, "De Principiis Naturae" The Modern Schoolman, XXVII, Jan. 1951, 153.

22 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 77, a. 1, ad 3.

23 I Sent. dist. 25, quest. 1, art. 1, ad 6.

24 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, c. 6, 56.



Coming to grips with the problem, is not individuation accounted for in the Thomistic synthesis by the mere fact that one substantial entity is obviously different from another through its act of existence? St. Thomas says "substance is individuated through itself."<sup>25</sup> Doesn't this harmonize with his definition of individual: "the individual in itself is undivided, but is distinct from others?"<sup>26</sup> The existent substance is an individual, "which is not divided further by formal or material difference."<sup>27</sup> Two things pertinent to the nature of a corporeal individual are found in the existent substance: "first that it is being in act in itself ..., second, that it is divided from others which are or can be in the same species, while it is undivided in itself."<sup>28</sup> Certainly we do not deny that the formal or proximate principle of individuation is the whole entity of the individual. In its entire entity one individual is distinguished from other individuals of the same species, e.g. Peter is different from Paul by his "Petrinity."<sup>29</sup> Our problem is not that an individual is a being in act and consequently different from other beings in act, but how it is not identical with other individuals of the same species by being this individual in act.<sup>30</sup>

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25 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 29, a. 1, c.

26 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 29, a. 4, c.

27 St. Thomas, In X Metaph. lect. 2.

28 St. Thomas, In IV Sent. dist. 12, quest. 1, art. 1, ad 3.

29 Fridericus Saintonge, S.J., Summa Cosmologiae, Du Messenger, Montreal, 1941, 387.

30 Renard, S.J., Philosophy of Being, 217.

It is important to distinguish the proximate relation of the individual to the species and to another individual. Every individual is a hoc aliquid containing two elements: a whatness and a thisness. Whatness indicates the nature, e.g. man, rose, stone. By this element the individual belongs to a determined species, which it shares with other individuals of the same species. Thisness indicates the suppositum, which is not communicable to others. "Individual and species, individuals of the same species, exclude themselves correlative through the supposite."<sup>31</sup>

The corporeal individual has two separable constituents, matter and form, which when united, compose this individual essence, this real thing. Since this or that matter does not belong to the specific nature of a corporeal creature and has nothing to do with the definition, it follows that for the individual nature and essence is required this matter with this form in this suppositum.<sup>32</sup>

Searching into the component principles of substance for the basis of individuation, there is a tendency to seize upon form. Does not the form give existence to the matter and accordingly to the composite? As a thing has existence, it has unity and individuation. True, but we must look into the difference between individuation and individuality before citing form as

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31 Slavin, O.P., Philosophical Basis, 58.

32 Ibid.

St. Thomas' principle of individuation. Individuation is an "operation which the form undergoes on being received into matter," says Gerrity.

"Individuality," he says, "is a positive perfection of the real order."<sup>33</sup>

Gilson observes that really the form is the active principle of individuation.<sup>34</sup> By this he means that the form causes the composite's individuality, a positive perfection, "nothing less than the concrete reality of the substance ... conferred upon matter by form and by an efficient cause."<sup>35</sup> Individuation is simply a name "used to indicate that natural forms, although universal and one when considered in themselves, are, in the order of being, actually realized only in particular and multiple embodiments."<sup>36</sup> Though matter is the principle of individuation, it does not cause individuality except by being its necessary subject. Since only individual substances are real, the form conferring actual being also confers individual being. It is necessary that matter, as a subject, receive the reality conferred by form. This is enough to call matter the principle of individuation. Still an individual owes much more to form than to matter. Form is the determining principle of every perfection of a substance. Individuating notes, as well as the existence of the composite, have as their active principle the form, while matter is simply the passive or receptive

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33 Gerrity, F.S.C., Theory of Matter, 30.

34 Gilson, The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. by Edward Bullough, ed. G.A. Elrington, O.P., Herder, London, 1937, 219.

35 Benignus Gerrity, F.S.C., Nature, Knowledge and God, Bruce, Milwaukee, 1947, 126.

36 Gerrity, Nature Knowledge and God, 126.

principle. Whenever St. Thomas calls matter the principle of individuation, he means that it is the receptive, passive, i.e. the material principle. It would be a mistake to conceive of material forms as subsisting alone universally until they are received by matter and made individual. Apart from matter, they do not exist. The only reason why matter exists is that material forms by their nature - in se non subsistens - are designed to constitute individuals. To fulfill their design they need a corresponding passive principle in which they can be received making possible their individuation. In this sense matter is named the principle of individuation by St. Thomas. Though the form is the active principle of the individual, it would be completely false to call it the principle of individuation. The matter individuates it by receiving it.<sup>37</sup>

Our problem is now sufficiently delineated to proceed to St. Thomas' solution. By way of recapitulation we may say: 1) We have excluded spiritual substances, God, angels, and separated souls, as impertinent. 2) We have eliminated individuating notes, since they merely manifest the individual. 3) We have deleted the form as the proximate principle of individuation by distinguishing between individuality and individuation. We are interested in showing that St. Thomas holds matter as the radical or remote principle of individuation and how matter exercises this function. In order to do this we have now to turn our attention in the next chapter to the meaning of prime matter in the Thomistic sense.

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37 Gerrity, Theory of Matter, 32.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE MEANING OF PRIME MATTER

Though St. Thomas says again and again that matter is the principle of individuation and insists that he means particular matter, not common matter such as a material essence includes;<sup>1</sup> this is not his complete answer. He explains particular matter succinctly as matter signed by quantity. What he means by this constitutes the core of the thesis. Before investigating the qualifying phrase, signed by matter, it is essential to accurate interpretation to grasp his concept of prime matter.

The essence of prime matter is potency.<sup>2</sup> Since in itself it is potentiality only, and potentiality means nothing else but to be ordained to actuality,<sup>3</sup> prime matter does not exist by itself.<sup>4</sup> It is in potentiality to substantial form which gives it first act, simply the act of existence. Apart from form it has no existence, but with form it makes up the concrete individual thing. In a way it is a principle of actual existence, since a

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1 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, 32.

2 St. Thomas, Summa Theol., I, Q, 77, A. 1, ad 2.

3 St. Thomas, Omnia Opera, Quaestiones Disputatae, Marietti, Turin-Rome, 6th ed, 1931, Vol. II, De Malo, Quaest. I, Art. II, 8.

4 St. Thomas, Summa Theol., I, Q. 7, A. 2, ad 3.

material form in itself is not a being but must inform some matter. Apart from its relation to form, prime matter is not a reality, not even a potential being, since nature cannot be defined or thought of unless in terms of this relation. Still prime matter is not simply a relation, because since relation is merely an accident it cannot constitute a substantial principle. Though neither matter nor form is an efficient cause, as material and formal cause they necessarily cause each other. The matter causes the form as its subject, and the form causes the matter by giving it actuality, e.g. marble receives the determination of the form of a statue and the shape of the statue makes the marble actually a statue. Since prime matter is in potentiality to first act, it has no reality whatsoever apart from the form which gives it first act.<sup>5</sup>

Matter and form, consequently, are not being themselves, but principles of being.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, they are real, because they constitute real beings. If prime matter were a logical being, the form would have to be a real being, not just a principle of the composite. Similarly, but its nature a material form is not a being but rather in a being.<sup>7</sup>

Though prime matter is a real constituent of being, it is not an actual being. If it were, its union with form would be purely accidental. Only the composite is an actual being, properly speaking. Matter and form

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5 St. Thomas, Opuscula Omnia, De Principiis Naturae, I, Op. II, 14.

6 St. Thomas, Sent., II, d. 3, q. 1, a. 6, 103.

7 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 40, a. 1, c.

are ens in quo and ens quo, not ens simply.<sup>8</sup> Their existence is a composite in one.<sup>9</sup>

Though matter is real, since it is dependent upon form and can not have an independent existence,<sup>10</sup> it follows that prime matter was not created alone and later determined to multitudinous types of beings by receiving various types of form. St. Thomas says it was concreated, the composite being the subject of creation.<sup>11</sup> Though prime matter has a certain priority of nature as that out of which everything is made, it has no priority of time.<sup>12</sup>

The matter in anything is the indeterminate principle, the purely passive principle. Consequently it is the passive cause in fieri of the concrete object, receiving determination and being. As an intrinsic cause in esse, a constitutive principle, it is a passive principle.<sup>13</sup> It is the principle that allows the composite to be acted upon by other things, but it is not the principle of the activities of the composite.<sup>14</sup>

8 St. Thomas, Summa Theol., I, q. 110, a. 2, c.

9 St. Thomas, Summa Contra Gentiles, Leonine, Desclee and Herder, Rome, 1934, IV, cap. 81, quod vero tertio, 547.

10 St. Thomas, Summa Theol., I, q. 7, a. 2, ad 3.

11 St. Thomas, Quaestiones Disputatae, De Potentia Dei, Marietti, Turin-Rome, 6th ed., 1931, I, q. 3, a. 1, ad 12, 39.

12 St. Thomas, Quaest. Disp., De Pot., q. 4, a. 1, c., 118.

13 St. Thomas, Quaestiones Disputatae, De Veritate, III, q. 26, a. 2, c., 248.

14 St. Thomas, Quaest. Disp., De Ver., III, q. 2, a. 5, c., 46.

Grabmann sums up the nature and existence of prime matter nicely:

"It is on the dividing line between reality and nothing; it is not the really existing, but the possibility of being; it is the pure, but real, potentiality of the totality of physical nature. Therein its entity is exhausted."<sup>15</sup>

St. Thomas ascribes certain attributes to prime matter as springing from its essence. He calls it infinite, not as God is infinite in His pure form, but because it is infinitely imperfect.<sup>16</sup> Even its infinity is imperfect, since it is predicated of prime matter secundum quid, because its potentiality is toward material forms only.<sup>17</sup> In potency to every substantial form, there is no accident that is not consequent to its determination by substantial form.<sup>18</sup>

Considered apart from all forms, matter is one. However, as it actually exists under various forms it is not one but different in each individual.

Often St. Thomas repeats that "matter exists for form." He uses this to point out the difference between individuality and individuation.

<sup>15</sup> Grabmann, Thomas Aquinas, 129.

<sup>16</sup> St. Thomas, Summa Theol., I, q. 4, a. 1, c.

<sup>17</sup> St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 7, a. 2, ad 3.

<sup>18</sup> St. Thomas, Sent. I, D. VIII, q. 5, a. 2, 228.



"There are many individuals of one species for the conservation of the species in things that are generated and corrupted."<sup>19</sup> A man's body exists for the sake of his soul, whose operations need the body, e.g. intellectual knowledge depends on the phantasm. The important thing in nature is the species, not the individual.<sup>20</sup> Because the form is the end of generation, matter is because of the form. Consequently forms are not given to matter because matter is disposed to receive forms, but because a form needs matter disposed in a certain way to have a certain nature.<sup>21</sup>

A composite owes nothing positive to prime matter except its materiality, and this only passively because ultimately it is material because it has a material form. Matter contributes nothing positive to the essence, but receives one or another essence depending upon what form actuates it. The composite's nature of corporeal substance is due to the matter only as a passive principle, but to the form as an active principle.<sup>22</sup> Adding nothing positive, matter merely limits the form of the composite.<sup>23</sup> The very existence of matter is laid to the fact that some form cannot exist unless received in a subject. Matter, a necessary subject for such forms,

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19 St. Thomas, Summa Theol., I, q. 47, a. 2, c.

20 St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 76, a. 5, c.

21 St. Thomas, Quaestiones Disputatae, De Anima, I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 16. 404.

22 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, II, 31.

23 St. Thomas, Summa Theol., I, q. 7, a. 1, c.

functions only by reason of its end, form.<sup>24</sup> The forms determine matter to themselves and warrant its existence.

Keeping St. Thomas' description of prime matter in mind, its essence and characteristics, we are in position to investigate what he means when he says that it is prime matter signed by quantity that is the principle of individuation of material forms.

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<sup>24</sup> St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, q. 5, a. 3, ad 3.

CHAPTER IV  
CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS OF  
QUANTITATE SIGNATA

Unmistakably St. Thomas holds that matter is the principle of individuation of material forms. This we have shown. However, St. Thomas underlines his usage of matter in this application. "Matter which is the principle of individuation is not any matter whatsoever, but only designated matter<sup>1</sup> (materia signata)."<sup>2</sup> Contrasting God's essence and man's in Contra Gentiles, he observes that man's essence is individuated "per materiam signatam of this or that individual, although the quiddity of genus or species includes form and matter in common."<sup>3</sup> Discussing man's knowledge of the singular St. Thomas differentiates between universal and individual, noting that "materia signata is the principle of individuation."<sup>4</sup> Clearly St. Thomas' repetitious use of materia signata establishes the fact that in ascribing individuation to prime matter he modifies that substantial principle in some way.

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1 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, 32.

2 St. Thomas, De Ente et Essentia, ed. Carolus Boyer, S.J., Aedes U. Gregoriana, Roma, 1950, 20.

3 St. Thomas, Contra Gentiles, I, 21, 23.

4 St. Thomas, De Veritate, Q. II, A. 6, 49.

What does St. Thomas mean by "signed matter"? He tells us himself: "By designated matter (materia signata) I mean matter considered under determined dimensions." Commenting upon this passage of De Ente et Essentia, Maurer says that a thing is designated - he translates signata as "designated" and equates Designatum and signatum - when it can be pointed to with the finger. The individual thing can be pointed to but not defined; the universal is opposite in both respects. In this way designated is equal to the demonstrative adjective this. Derived meanings of the word are determined and limited.<sup>5</sup> Tacitly Rickaby agrees when he translates the passage of Contra Gentiles quoted above as: "species are individualized according to the definite matter of this or that individual" - definite matter substituted for materia signata.<sup>6</sup> The interpretations of these men are verified by St. Thomas' own interchangeable use of signata, designata, and determinata in De Ente et Essentia, In Boetium De Trinitate, and De Principio Individuationis. In the last mentioned, where St. Thomas treats of individuation ex expresso, it is remarkable that he does not use materia signata, but rather "matter under determined quantity."<sup>7</sup> In De Ente and In

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<sup>5</sup> St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, 32. In translating Signata as designated and equating designatum and signatum claims no originality but points to Roland-Gosselin's Le "De Ente et Essentia". Boyer uses signata (p.19) and designata (pp. 26 & 38).

<sup>6</sup> St. Thomas, Cont. Gent., II, 21, Rickaby, 88.

<sup>7</sup> St. Thomas, Opuscula Omnia, De Principio Individuationis, 196.

V Metaphysics where signed matter is explained in terms of dimensions, St. Thomas hints at quantity, but in the opusculum on individuation he actually says that signed means quantified. This clarifies De Veritate's double acceptance of matter: signed, as it is considered with a determination of dimensiones; unsigned, as without determination of dimensions.<sup>8</sup> And it is presumed in the Summa's explanation that the human intellect understands material things by abstraction from the phantasm:

matter is twofold, common and signate, or individual; common, such as flesh and bone; individual, such as this flesh and these bones. The intellect therefore abstracts the species of a natural thing from the individual sensible matter, but not from the common sensible matter. For example, it abstracts the species of man from this flesh and these bones, which do not belong to the species as such, but to the individual, and need not be considered in the species. But the species of man cannot be abstracted by the intellect from flesh and bones.<sup>9</sup>

Associating quantity with matter as the principle of individuation is in keeping with St. Thomas' concept of prime matter. He not only says that considered in itself it is not the principle of diversity in a species,<sup>10</sup> but he explains why it is not. In itself prime matter is indistinct and one through lack of determination of any form.<sup>11</sup> Since it does not have parts except through quantity, it is not divisible unless quantified.<sup>12</sup> However,

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8 St. Thomas, De Veritate, Q. II, a. 6, ad 1, 49.

9 St. Thomas, Summa Theol., I, Q. 85, A. 1, ad 2.

10 St. Thomas, In Boetium de Trinitate, IV, 2, 85.

11 St. Thomas, II Sent. D. 30, Q.2, A.1, c. 781

12 St. Thomas, De Natura Materiae, C.III, 201.

it is not the quantity itself, nor the dimensions, that are the principles of individuation. These are only accidents, and accidents cannot be the cause of the substance that sustains them.<sup>13</sup>

How then does quantity sign matter to enable it to function as the principle of individuation? Is quantity a coprinciple with matter of equal import in the work of individuation or does it play a humbler role as an indispensable condition? St. Thomas in different places suggests both. In Boetium de Trinitate he says: "It is patent that matter considered in itself is not the principle of diversity in species."<sup>14</sup> In De Natura Materiae he says: "Matter is indeed the principle of individuation, as it is the first and only subject of form."<sup>15</sup> St. Thomas is not notorious for shifting positions on a topic without warning, and it is not likely that he does so on such a key thesis as individuation. However, he seems obscure in his evaluation of the quantity that signs matter in individuation. Coprinciple or condition? Perhaps it was so clear in his mind that he presumed his thought obvious to everyone. At any rate, among the major commentators two contradictory lines of thought are evident, each vouching for its authenticity by reference to St. Thomas' texts. Inspection of Cajetan and

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13 St. Thomas, De Nat. Mat., III, 202.

14 St. Thomas, In Boetium de Trinitate, IV, 2, 85.

15 St. Thomas, De Natura Materiae, II, 201.

Ferrara<sup>16</sup> will bring out possible resolutions of the problem. Each of these men was cognizant of the other's thought. Contemporaries, they allude to each other's opinions, though not by name.

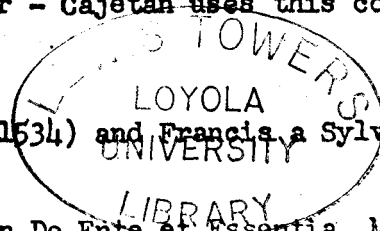
In his commentary upon De Ente et Essentia, using the text "matter which is the principle of individuation is not any matter whatsoever, but only designated matter" as a pivot, Cajetan turns to the question: Whether matter is the principle of individuation. Duly defining individual as "indistinctum a se et distinctum ab aliis" and noting the by products of individuation: incommunicability and distinction from others of the same species, he states that St. Thomas' opinion, stated in many places, is that signed matter is the principle of individuation.<sup>17</sup> Cajetan cites the major places in St. Thomas' work as the bases of his opinion. He refers to the Metaphysics where St. Thomas confirms Aristotle's unum per se as a continuum.<sup>18</sup> In De Veritate from the context of God's immediate knowledge of all things he excerpts the idea that materia signata is so essential to the individual that if the singular could be defined signed matter would be in the definition.<sup>19</sup> From the same book - where St. Thomas treats of the intellectual knowledge of the material singular - Cajetan uses this con-

16 Thomas De Vio, Caietani (1469 - 1534) and Francis a Sylvestris de Ferrara (Ferrariensis) 1474 - 1528).

17 Thomas De Vio, Caietani, O.P., In De Ente et Essentia, M. H. Laurent, Marietti, Turin, 1934, C. II, Q. 5, 53.

18 St. Thomas, In V Metaphysicam Aristotelis, Lect. 8, n. 876.

19 St. Thomas, De Veritate, Q. II, A. 6, Resp., 50.



sideration: matter in itself is not the principle of individuation, but matter in the singular, which is matter existing under determined dimensions.<sup>20</sup> Inter-locking these notions, he forms a double equation: signed matter equals the matter proper to the individual, equals matter under certain dimensions. Accordingly, as St. Thomas says, multiplication in a species is through dimensive quantity,<sup>21</sup> materia quantitate signata.

Though all Thomists agree that matter and quantity concur in individuation, some say that an aggregate of matter and quantity is the intrinsic principle of individuation, matter lending the individual incommunicability and quantity conferring a distinction from other things. Cajetan labels this notion "materia quanta" and claims that it strays from St. Thomas' concept of materia signata. By materia signata St. Thomas meant nothing more than "that matter capable of this quantity in such a way that it is not capable of any other." This matter would be an intrinsic part of Sortes' definition if he could be defined. Cajetan explains it this way: In the first generation of Sortes, i.e. the first existence of Sortes and the first non-existence of the preceding form and accidents, in the order of nature the particular composite comes into existence first. Then in the order of nature all the accidents follow the particular composite that per se terminates the generation. Matter, which is an intrinsic part of Sortes, is appropriated to Sortes himself, because he is a particular agent capable of no other quantity

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20 St. Thomas, De Ver., Q. X, A. 5, Resp., 234.

21 St. Thomas, Cont. Gent., IV, 65, 529.



than that determined to himself. It is this matter, according to Cajetan, that is called signata.

In fine, materia signata adds nothing to matter except a receptive potency (capacity) for this quantity and not that. Receptive potency does not add anything really distinct, says Cajetan, but he insists it does contribute something real to matter that is only logically distinct from it. It is matter in order to this or that quantity that distinguishes material things numerically.<sup>22</sup>

With this exposition in De Ente et Essentia Cajetan does not rest his case forever. Considering the same problem in his commentary on the first article of the twenty-ninth question in the first part of the Summa, he alters the proposition he maintained in De Ente. Though he upholds vigorously that material substance is individuated by matter under certain dimensions, proper and intrinsic, constitutive and distinctive - it is monstrous to separate these acts in the concrete - he retracts much of what he said in De Ente. "These, matter under certain dimensions, I do not understand as I once exposed in the commentary on De Ente et Essentia (V), matter with a potency to quantity, since that potency ... is in the genus of quantity.... But I understand matter distinct in number, not as the subject of quantity, but as prior in nature, the foundation, root and cause of (quantity) itself."<sup>23</sup> By way of explanation, Cajetan shows that this is more

22 Cajetan, In De Ente et Essentia, C. II, Q. 5, 53 - 56.

23 St. Thomas, Opera Omnia, Leonine, with com. of Thomas De Vio Caietan, O.P., Polyglotta, Rome, 1887. Tome IV, I Pars Summa Theol., Q. 29, A. 1, Com., 328.

in conformity with St. Thomas' thought, especially as expressed in the Metaphysics, where he indicates the respective differences of the objects of mathematics, metaphysics, and natural science.<sup>24</sup>

Since the effect must be proportionate to the cause, matter is distinct in itself before it is quantified. The numerical distinction between Socrates and Plato as men is not a quantitative distinction but the foundation of a quantitative distinction. In the same way the principle of distinction between this man and that is the root of quantity and consequently of the distinction following it. However, Cajetan emphasizes, this matter, which is an essential part of the composite terminating a natural substantial generation, is first in the order of nature, prior to adhesion of accidents. With the composite it must be singular, distinct from the universal, *per se ens* and *unum*, because only such can exist. In this way each thing is a "this" and distinguished from others.

Does Cajetan, then, delete quantity from the process of individuation? He says he does not: "I don't deny that maxim held in the sense of Aristotle and St. Thomas, i.e. that numerical distinction of matter pertains first to quantity and through it to other things."<sup>25</sup> However, matter, which is the root and foundation of quantity, is not in a subject without participating in the nature of quantity. We can say this better: "It 'prehas' the nature of quantity."<sup>26</sup> Prehas? Cajetan explains this awkward

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24 St. Thomas, In XI Metaph., Lect. 4, n. 2208, 630.

25 St. Thomas, Opera Omnia, Leonine, Comment of Cajetan, I, Q.29, A.1, Com., 329 (IX).

26 Ibid.

term this way: It is necessary that every effect be convenient to something before it modify that thing, e.g. the formal effects in vegetative and sensitive things. However the distinction that we are talking about is not the formal effect of quantity, matter as such does not contain quantity."<sup>27</sup>

Without pausing to comment on Cajetan's interpretation of St. Thomas, note the highlights of his thinking before passing on to Ferrara. In De Ente et Essentia he says that matter plays the lead role in individuation. Quantity is relegated to a subsidiary post, since it is a mere capacity that matter has of receiving this extension rather than that. On second thought, in commenting on the Summa, he retracts this because he has given matter quantification of some sort, not actual quantity but appetitudinal. This is too much since it detracts from the importance of matter as the individuating agent. Quantity is caused by matter and is subsequent to matter. Nevertheless, it always accompanies matter, so it has some share in individuation.

Ferrara does not agree with Cajetan. In his commentary on Contra Gentiles, after exposing St. Thomas' thought on the identity of God with his essence, he makes a study of St. Thomas' theory of the individuation of material substances. As a preliminary he observes that a material suppositum embraces the essence itself and individuating principles, which principles do not constitute the essence but limit it to form this

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27 Ibid.

individual.<sup>28</sup>

In answer to the immediate difficulty that the essence in this light seems not the formal cause of the suppositum but the material cause since it receives accidents, he says: "We do not claim the suppositum includes the essence and individuating accidents in such a way that accidents accrue to an essence that has already been constituted in a specific existence to make it a pupposital existence." Instead, Ferrara imagines that first matter is disposed and limited through quantity and other accidents individuating it. Then the form is united to matter so disposed according to its ultimate perfection. The result is an individuated essence.<sup>29</sup>

Accidents exist in matter before it is substantially informed. Not exactly, says Ferrara. Though these accidents are received in substance, since they are dispositions of matter, they are not received in the substance which is the essence of the species. Since the material form gives corporeal existence and individual existence (hoc esse), they "are understood to be received in matter as it is actuated through a form conferring corporeal existence only, though in potency to individual existence of a this, e.g. horse."<sup>30</sup> To individual existence the corporeal existent things is disposed by accidents. "These accidents are preunderstood in matter in the process of

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28 St. Thomas, Opera Omnia, Leonine, Tome III, Summa Contra Gentiles, with Comment. of Francis De Sylvestris Ferrariensis, O.P. Garroni, Rome, 1918, Bk. I, Cap. 21, Com., 64.

29 St. Thomas, Opera Omnia, Cont. Gent., Bk. I, C. 21, Com., 64.

30 St. Thomas, Ibid.

generation which substantial form terminates in the ultimate grade."<sup>31</sup> In this way the quiddities are individuated according to the signed matter of this or that individual, though they include the form and matter in common.

Ferrara is aware that there is not complete agreement with this interpretation: "Some Thomists say that materia signata is the matter itself capable of this quantity and not that; they say this capacity is not something really distinct from matter because signata adds only the capacity of this quantity, distinct only by reason." These men, he explains, think that a particular agent appropriates matter to this particular form. They imagine that in the first instant of the generation of Sortes, in the order of nature first a composite comes into existence, then in the same order all accidents follow. In the particular composite that first and per se terminates generation, the matter, an intrinsic part of Sortes, is appropriated to Sortes in such a way that it is not capable of another quantity. Matter so appropriated, these Thomists call Materia signata. This opinion was voiced by Cajetan in De Ente et Essentia. Ferrara presents it accurately, using the same terminology.

However, "though this is the opinion of very learned men, it does not seem to me to be in accordance with the mind of St. Thomas."<sup>32</sup> The basis of Ferrara's disagreement is that Materia signata, accepted as matter so

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31 St. Thomas, Ibid.

32 Ibid.

appropriated to Sortes that it is capable of the quantity of Sortes and no other, cannot serve as a principle of individuation. His rebuttle takes the shape of a dilemma: In that priority of nature in which matter is said to be itself appropriated, either there is some form in the matter through which it is appropriated to the soul of Sortes, or there is no form. If there is a form, it is either substantial or accidental, and in either event materia signata is not simply prime matter, but matter with a form through which it is signata or appropriated. If, on the contrary, there is no form whatsoever in appropriated matter, the opinion runs opposite to St. Thomas' affirmation that no potency receives limitation and appropriation except through some act which it receives.<sup>33</sup> Prime matter, of course, is pure potency, and as such it does not have determination and limitation except through some form, whose function is to limit and determine. Accordingly, if signed matter must be pertinent to the individual (*esse ad hoc*) since the form is individuated through such a signing, it must be through some act really distinct from the matter. So signed matter is not just matter itself exclusive of everything really distinct from it, but "matter with some limiting form."<sup>34</sup>

A much better opinion, according to Ferrara, because it represents the mind of St. Thomas: materia signata is matter under quantity. Both matter and quantity concur actively and equally it seems in individuation. Through matter the composite is individual and incommunicable because it eliminates communication such as the universal gives a particular. A nature

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33 St. Thomas, Opera Omnia, Cont. Gent., Com. Q.21, A.1, 66.

34 St. Thomas, Summa Theol., I, Q. 7, A. 1.

received in matter cannot be shared with an inferior, since matter is the first subject of form and cannot be received in an inferior. Quantity enables an individual to be distinct from another individual of the same species. In fine, the individual includes two things: incommunicable matter and quantity. So materia quantitate signata, the principle of individuation, entails two factors: matter to make the individual incommunicable, and quantity to make it numerically distinct from other of the same species.<sup>35</sup> For approbation Ferrara points to De Principio Individuationis.<sup>36</sup>

But the substantial form must precede the quantity that arises from it. Ferrara anticipates this objection. "There is no instant in which the material form is united to matter without the presence of quantity, because this form is not united to matter unless it is this matter distinct from another part of matter."<sup>37</sup> He refers to In Boetium de Trinitate for corroboration. Though things are this way in reality, the intellect may be able to consider matter and quantity separately. It might seem to some that first we understand the form received in matter to constitute the compositum and then the compositum receiving accidents. But in this consideration, though matter is understood as individual inasmuch as it is incommunicable - the principal condition of individuation, without quantity it cannot be understood to be distinct from everything else by being signed here and now. So it

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35 Ibid.

36 Ferrara does not question the authenticity of this opusculum.

37 St. Thomas, Opera Omnia, Cont. Gent., I, c.29, Com., (VIII) 67.

seems that the two cannot be conceivably separated:

The form cannot be understood to be in matter and to constitute this suppositum unless quantity is preunderstood in matter, through which it is made this and distinct from another part of matter; matter is not this unless by some act limiting it and distinguishing it. The assumption is false that puts in some instant, outside the intellect, form in matter in which there is not also quantity. In our intellect there is not a priority in which an individual can be understood distinct from others numerically (without quantity).<sup>38</sup>

Ferrara's reason: by its nature and entity matter is indivisible and one in number, and it cannot be divided into many parts as a superior into inferiors. Only through quantity can it have extension and be divided into parts.

In appraising materia quantitate signata Ferrara arrives at a position contrary to Cajetan's. Where Cajetan stresses the part matter plays in individuation to the point of making matter the principle and quantity a mere condition of matter, Ferrara boosts quantity to the equal of matter. Cajetan sees in matter an order to quantity; Ferrara speaks of a quantified prime matter that receives an ultimate perfection by being united to form. Cajetan says matter cannot receive an accidental perfection before it is informed substantially; Ferrara says matter without quantity can even be conceived. For Cajetan quantity is a condition of individuation; for Ferrara quantity is a coprinciple of individuation, on a par with matter.

Both of these men claim to be devulging the thought of St. Thomas. Both refer to texts from St. Thomas as their bases. Clearly we have a stale-

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38 Ibid.



mate with no hope of ascertaining the mind of St. Thomas on this question if we consider his texts apart from their historical context. Placed against the light of contemporaneous philosophical disputes and concurrent problems, the texts of St. Thomas should be more meaningful and point to the proper understanding of his materia quantitate signata.

CHAPTER V  
HISTORICAL DETERMINATION OF THE MEANING OF  
QUANTITATE SIGNATA

We may begin the reconstruction of the historical context of the problem of individuation, upon which we shall depend for a solution of the problem of interpretation of quantitate signata posed in the preceding chapter, by comparing the approaches of St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas. It is common knowledge that St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure were contemporaries. They taught at the University of Paris at the same time. Though friends, they were at odds philosophically as leaders of their respective schools. Prominent among their differences was their solutions to the problem of individuation. Bonaventure's opinion was judged orthodox and laudable; St. Thomas' was proscribed by name.<sup>1</sup> Still the two had so much in common that the circumspect Gilson could state that on this issue their difference is reduced to one of terminology.<sup>2</sup> Comparing the theories of the two scholastics will bring out in sharper relief St. Thomas' thought and provide a basis for judging and choosing between Cajetan and Ferrara - these two exhaust alternatives - to arrive at St. Thomas' meaning of materia quantitate signata.

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1 Grabmann, Thomas Aquinas, 58.

2 Gilson, Spirit of Mediaeval Phil., 464.

The individual, according to St. Bonaventure, is a "this something," a hoc aliquid. "That it is a this, it owes principally to matter, by reason of which a form has position in place and time. That it is something is due to the form. ...Therefore in creatures individuation springs from a double principle."<sup>3</sup> The individual, he says, is not only divided in itself, but divided from all others.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the universal, which is predicated of many,<sup>5</sup> the individual is incommunicable. It is constituted of properties the sum of which cannot be reproduced in another.<sup>6</sup>

For St. Bonaventure the root of individuation is both matter and form. He is quite clear on this: "Individuation rises from the indivisibility and appropriation of principles; while they are joined together, the principles of a thing themselves mutually appropriate each other and constitute the individual."<sup>7</sup> Because matter is indifferent to any individual, as disposed to all and in itself the cause of none, "it is very difficult to see how matter, which is common to all, shall be the main principle and cause of numerical distinction."<sup>8</sup> St. Bonaventure would not say that since matter is not the main principle of distinction, form must be, "because again, it is

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3 St. Bonaventure, Omnia Opera, Tom. II, Commentary on the Four Books of the Sentences of Peter Lombard, Bk. II, D. 3, P. I, A. 2, Q. 3, 109.

4 St. Bonaventure, Omnia Opera, Tom. II, Com. In II Sent., D. X, A. I, q. 3, 262.

5 St. Bonaventure, Op. Oia., II, In II Sent., D. V, A. 2, Q. 2.

6 St. Bonaventure, Op. Oia., II, In II Sent., D. X, A. 1, Q. 3.

7 St. Bonaventure, Op. Oia., II, In II Sent., D. 2, R. 1, A. 2, Q. 2, 105.

8 St. Bonaventure, Op. Oia., II, In II Sent., D. 3, P. 1, A. 2, Q. 3, 109.

very difficult to understand how form is the total and the main cause of numerical distinction, because every created form has been produced to have another similar to it, ... how can we say two fires differ formally, or even other things, that are multiplied and distinguished numerically, solely by a division of a continuum, where there is no induction of a new form?"<sup>9</sup> Therefore St. Bonaventure credits individuation to matter and form:

Individuation arises from the actual conjunction of matter with the form, as a result of which one appropriates the other, as is evident when there is the expression of many images in wax, which before was one; neither can the images be distinguished without the wax nor can the wax be numbered except for the fact that there are various images in it. If, however, you seek the principal source of it, one must say that the individual is hoc aliquid. That it is hoc is due principally to the matter, by reason of which the form has its position in place and time. That it is aliquid is due to the form. The individual, moreover, has essence and existence. The existence is contributed by the matter and the essence by the form. Individuation, therefore, in creatures, arises from a double principle.<sup>10</sup>

St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas, therefore are not in accordance on the problem of individuation. While St. Thomas teaches that the principle of individuation is materia signata, St. Bonaventure holds that the principle of individuation is matter and form.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, there is such apparent affinity between them, that unless the distinction of individuation and

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9 St. Bonaventure, Op. Oia., II, In II Sent., D.3, P.1, a.2, q.3, 109.

10 St. Bonaventure, Opa Oia, In II Sent., D.3, P.1, A.2, Q.3, 109.

11 Clement M. O'Donnell, O.F.M., The Psychology of St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas, Cath. U. of America, Washington, D.C., 1937.

individuality is made the two theories seem to coincide.<sup>12</sup>

However, when we subject St. Bonaventure's concepts of matter and form to closer scrutiny, the apparent similarity to St. Thomas falls apart. St. Bonaventure considers matter from two aspects. In its nature matter is just this capacity or possibility to receive forms: "matter in its essence is informed with every possibility; and while it is so considered, its form is a capacity for forms."<sup>13</sup> In this light it is one because as absolutely indeterminate it receives all its diversity from forms, and it is infinite because it has an endless capacity to receive forms. But as it is found in nature, matter always exists in a particular place at a particular time, subject to rest and motion. As such it is "impossible that informed matter exist deprived of every form."<sup>14</sup> The matter of spiritual and corporeal substances is different.<sup>15</sup> As St. Bonaventure sees it, "corporeal" fills only part of the extension of the term "matter." This is because matter applies to beings not because they are corporeal, but because they are contingent.<sup>16</sup> While matter can receive either spiritual or corporeal forms, and in this way is prior to form metaphysically, it is never separated from some kind of existence. Consequently, once it has received corporeal or

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12 This distinction is made in the opening chapter, p. 9 and 10.

13 St. Bonaventure, In II Sent., D.12, A.1, Q.1, 294.

14 St. Bonaventure, Ibid.

15 St. Bonaventure, In II Sent., D.17, A.1, Q.2, 414.

16 St. Bonaventure, In II Sent., D.3, P.I, A.1, Q.1, Schol., 93.

spiritual existence it never loses that existence. That is why, Pegis explains, St. Bonaventure can hold that matter in itself is one though the matter of spiritual and corporeal substances differ, because "such a difference is derived, not from matter, but from the diversity consequent upon existence and the forms of existence."<sup>17</sup>

Applied to the soul: "Since the rational soul is a hoc aliquid, and naturally subsists by itself and acts as well as receives actions, we must follow a mean and say that it contains, within itself, the foundation of its own existence, a material principle through which it has being. On the other hand, this is not necessary in the case of the brute soul because it is founded in the body. Consequently, since it is a material principle through which the existence of a creature is fixed in itself, we must admit that the human soul contains matter. This matter, however, is above the conditions of extension, privation and corruption, and is, therefore, called spiritual matter."<sup>18</sup>

The implications of this text are of paramount importance. Even though St. Bonaventure does not grant a pre-existence of souls,<sup>19</sup> composition of matter and form in the soul coupled with a body "which is composed of matter and form"<sup>20</sup> reshapes the theory of matter and form and necessitates a new interpretation of unity and change in substance. To be composed of matter and form is really to be a substance complete in itself.

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17 Anton C. Pegis, *St. Thomas and the Problem of the Soul in the Thirteenth Century*, St. Michael's College, Toronto, Canada, 1934, p. 36.

18 St. Bonaventure, Opa. Oia., II, In II Sent., A.1, Q.2, Conc, 414.

19 St. Bonaventure, Opa Oia., II, In II Sent., D. 18, a.2, Q.3, 453.

20 St. Bonaventure, Opa. Oia., II, In II Sent., D.17, A.1, Q.2, ad 6, 415.

Nothing complete in itself can be joined to a third thing. St. Bonaventure's man seems just an accidental aggregate of two independent and complete substances. An ancient difficulty returns. St. Bonaventure anticipates the difficulty and solves it to his own satisfaction. When matter and form exhaust all capacity both have for further development they cannot enter into composition to establish a third thing. In this case matter must satisfy and terminate completely form's appetite for matter, and conjointly form must satisfy completely and terminate matter's appetite for form. Then there can be no further composition. However, "though the rational soul has a composition from matter and form, still it has an appetite for perfecting a corporeal nature, just as an organic body is composed of matter and form and has nevertheless an appetite for receiving a soul."<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, a true composite substance is one in which there is a perfect proportion between matter and form and in which the component elements compliment each other in their highest development.

The terminology is Aristotelian and Thomistic; the thought is basically Platonic and Augustinian. Breaking down form into matter and form and endowing matter with a form apart from whatever form it might receive to establish the composite obliterates hylemorphic concepts of matter, form and composition. If matter has a form and form has a form, how is the composite one substantially? Despite St. Bonaventure's account of successive and preparatory presence of forms leading to the unity of the individual a

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<sup>21</sup> St. Bonaventure, Opa Oia., II, In II Sent., D. 17, A.1 Q.2, ad 6, 415.

plurality of forms destroys the composite substance, as Thomists see it. True, St. Bonaventure does not combat St. Thomas openly on this issue. John Peckham did, however, and Peckham was a subject of the General of the Conventuals - St. Bonaventure - who, resident at Paris was aware of the dispute. It was to St. Bonaventure that Peckham turned for information and corroboration.<sup>22</sup> The idea of the preparatory function of forms is so controlling in St. Bonaventure that he does not see how form can be joined to matter without the mediation and disposition of intervening form. Blanket approval of Peckham and disagreement with St. Thomas is patent in this vitriolic passage: "It is insane to say that the ultimate form is added to prime matter without something, which may be a disposition or in potency to it, or without some interjected form."<sup>23</sup>

Historians seem agreed that though St. Bonaventure's alterations of the significance of matter and form have as a necessary by-product a plurality of forms, he does not so much discuss this theory as develops a doctrine that rests on this theory.<sup>24</sup> Equally important with plurality of forms in St. Bonaventure's composite is another feature of the aftermath of his ideas of matter and form: the rationes seminales. This he does treat of explicitly. It is his answer to how forms are present in matter and what part a created agent plays in the education of these forms from matter.

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22 Etienne Gilson, The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure, trans. Dom Iltyd Trethowan and F.J. Sheed, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1938, 27.

23 St. Bonaventure, Op. Oia., V, In Hexameron, Collatio 4, 10, 351.

24 Pegis, Problems of the Soul, 43. Pegis lists E. Gilson, M. de Wulf, G. Thery, and the Quaracchi editors as subscribing to this opinion.



Now we may suppose that nature does something and it does not produce something from nothing, and when it acts on matter, it must produce a form. And since matter is not a part of form and form does not become a part of matter, it must be that forms are in matter in some way before they are produced; and the substance of matter is filled with all; therefore the rationes seminales of all forms are in matter itself.<sup>25</sup>

On its face value this explanation of rationes seminales borders on the doctrine of Anaxagoras, which presupposes that forms are actually present in matter, but Bonaventure himself rules out Anaxagoras because he posits the coexistence of contraries in matter and eliminates the causality of the external agent, which St. Bonaventure finds an impossible explanation of change in nature. He discards Avicenna on the charge that he too strips secondary causes of any meaning.<sup>26</sup> St. Bonaventure's forms are indeed in the potency of matter, but as Pegis explains, this capacity is not that in which (in qua) and from which (aqua) but that out of which (ex qua) the forms are produced. This means not that the forms are derived from the essence of the matter itself, but that there is something in matter, created with the matter itself, out of which the agent acting on the matter produces the form. This "something" is what can and does become the form, "because in the matter itself there is something concrete from which the agent while acting on matter itself educes the form."<sup>27</sup> Again the "something" in matter is not a part of the form that can be produced, but what can be a form and becomes a

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25 St. Bonaventure, Op. Oia., In IV Sent., D.43, A.1, Q.4, Con., 888.

26 St. Bonaventure, Op. Oia., In II Sent., D.7, P. II, A.2, Q.1, c. 197.

27 St. Bonaventure, Ibid.

form "just as a rosebud becomes a rose."<sup>28</sup>

Our major consideration here is not to expound the cosmology of St. Bonaventure. We are concerned with showing that despite the affinity of terminology, he adulterates the Aristotelian concept of matter by enjoining with it a form of some sort. His plurality of forms and rationes seminales are outgrowths of his use of "matter" and serve to illustrate his departure from Aristotelian and Thomistic meanings.

Pegis traces Bonaventure's stand to Peter Lombard, for whom form is a disposition introduced into the basic reality, matter. The indetermination of matter itself refers to its capacity for further development. Beyond Lombard he goes to St. Augustine's informity of matter when he thought of it as the original chaos (terra) of creation, whose characteristic essential aspect was a formlessness. Clearly it had a form, because it is impossible that a corporeal substance exist without a form. Nevertheless, it was formless inasmuch as it was so confused that not even the elements were discernable. All corporeal substances were created in a confused unity that required the six days work to be ordered and arranged.<sup>29</sup>

St. Bonaventure's successors in the Franciscan Schools developed his doctrine. Matthew of Aquasparta saw no difficulty in the teaching of a plurality of forms. An individual could have many existences and still

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28 Pegis, Problem of the Soul, 47.

29 Pegis, Problem of the Soul, 70.

remain one being. Multiple forms does not conflict with the unity of an individual substance, because such unity is derived from the completing individual form, not from substantial forms. Conclusively, Matthew rejects the unity of the substantial form and cheers the condemnation of this doctrine.<sup>30</sup> William de la Mare in Correctorium Corruptorii Quare insists that the soul as a substantial form is to be considered as perfecting the existence of the composite, not the principle of existence. So he says: "the existence of the soul and the existence of the composite is the existence of two things and not of one thing; and this is not unbecoming that the existence of two things should be dual."<sup>31</sup>

Under the guidance of St. Bonaventure, developing ideas that are purely Franciscan, Peter Olivi defended in his Quaestiones In II Sententiarum the doctrine of the actuality of matter unconditionally: "I believe ... that matter according to its essence has some act or actuality, distinct moreover from the act that is the same as form ... some real entity." Olivi's statement dovetails with Matthew of Aquasparta's explanation that matter "has an essence distinct from the essence of form, and from this it has its idea in God" ... so that ... "since every nature and essence has a corresponding existence, this (matter), in itself is not nothing, so it is an ens; and if it is an ens it has existence." Through God's omnipotence, then, prime matter could exist without a form. Scotus emphasizes that "since matter is a

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30 Ibid., 53.

31 Pegis, Prob. of the Soul, 56.

principle and cause of being, it must of necessity be some being, a reality distinct from the form, something positive." This does not infringe upon the unity of a substantial composite, because "just as it is not repugnant per se that a composite be one, it is not repugnant that it be made up of some actual beings really distinct."<sup>32</sup> This is found because, according to his best interpreters, St. Bonaventure held that matter can be separated from form and exist independent of it.

From this cursory examination of St. Bonaventure and the development of his doctrine in the hands of successive leaders in the Franciscan School, it is quite clear that Bonaventure's acceptance of prime matter is radically different from St. Thomas'. When St. Bonaventure introduces spiritual matter to safeguard the subsistence and individuation of souls departed from bodies, he garbles the Thomistic import of matter. His acceptance of matter leads to a plurality of forms in a substantial composite and leans upon rationes seminales as an explanation of the new form in substantial change. All of these doctrines militate against Thomism.

Repeatedly St. Thomas decries spiritual matter. "There is no composition of matter and form in a soul or an intelligence so that matter may be thought to exist in them as it does in corporeal substances.... it is not impossible that some form exist without matter, for form as such does not depend upon matter."<sup>33</sup> Some say that the soul is composed of matter and form,

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32 Pegis, Prob. of the Soul, 67-69.

33 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, C.IV, 44.

but this does not seem to be true, because no form is made intelligible except through this, that it is separated from matter and the trappings of matter. However this is not in that matter is corporeal in a perfect corporeity, because the form of corporeity itself is intelligible through separation from material."<sup>34</sup> More forcefully St. Thomas says, "It is impossible for matter to be in spiritual substances,... the ordered scheme of things does not in any sense imply that spiritual substances, for their own actual being, need prime matter, which is the most incomplete of all beings."<sup>35</sup>

Plurality of forms has no place in St. Thomas' teaching. True, he sometimes speaks of a form of corporeity, but he makes certain that he is not misinterpreted, because the form of corporeity of any body is "nothing else but its substantial form."<sup>36</sup> To him St. Bonaventure's composite is an accidental aggregate, since "it is impossible that there be many substantial forms of one thing."<sup>37</sup>

St. Bonaventure's rationes seminales find St. Thomas unsympathetic. He calls the opinion unreasonable that "places all natural forms in act, latent in matter, so that the natural agent does nothing but extract them, making the occult manifest."<sup>38</sup> Without explicit reference to St. Bonaventure he explains that natural forms pre-exist in matter but not in act, "as some

34 St. Thomas, In I Sent., D.8, Q.5, A.2, Sol., 228.

35 St. Thomas, On Spiritual Creatures, A. 1, Resp., 21 and 22.

36 St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, Bk. IV, C. 81, 546.

37 St. Thomas, In Aristotelis Librum De Anima, Pirota, O.P. Marietti, Turin, 1925, Bk. II, lect. 1, n. 224, 82.

38 St. Thomas, Quaest. Disp., De Veritate, Q.11, A.1, 265.

say," but only in potency, from which they are reduced to act by some external agent.<sup>39</sup> Substantial form does not come to a subject already existing in act, but to one existing in potency only, i.e. prime matter.<sup>40</sup>

St. Thomas' discrepancies with St. Bonaventure on spiritual matter, plurality of forms, and education of forms are reduced to their initial diversity in understanding matter. Over and over St. Thomas insists that prime matter is amorphous. "Prime matter, as it is considered stripped of every form, does not have any diversity, neither is it made diverse through any accidents before the advent of the substantial form, because accidental existence does not precede substantial."<sup>41</sup> Consequently the first substantial form perfects the whole matter, because matter does not have division from the quiddity of substance but from corporiety, which the dimensions of quantity follow in act. Afterwards different forms are acquired in it through a division of matter according to diverse situs.<sup>42</sup> It necessarily comes to this: "the first division is according to matter itself, because there is no division of matter unless matter itself is distinguished in itself, not because of a different disposition, or form or quantity."<sup>43</sup> Since matter of its nature is simply in potency to existence, "it is

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39 Ibid.

40 St. Thomas, In De Anima, II, 1, n.224, 82.

41 St. Thomas, In I Sent., D.8, Q.5, A.2, 228.

42 Ibid.

43 St. Thomas, Opuscula Omnia, I, De Substantiis Separatis, C.V,

necessary to accept the distinction of matter not according as it is vested in different forms or dispositions - this is besides the essence of matter - but by a distinction of potency in respect to the diversity of forms."<sup>44</sup>  
 Without a doubt St. Thomas' matter is no more than pure potency. St. Bonaventure's is potency with some act.

Returning to the trunk of this thesis, the election of Cajetan's or Ferrara's interpretation of St. Thomas' quantitate signata, there now seems no choice. Ferrara is a shadow of St. Bonaventure on St. Thomas' principle of individuation. In the light of St. Thomas' disagreement with St. Bonaventure, Ferrara's interpretation is condemned by St. Thomas himself.

Note the resemblance between Ferrara and St. Bonaventure. Ferrara says the prime matter that receives substantial form is already disposed and limited by quantity. Rephrased, matter has accidental form before it has substantial form. Logically, then, since accidents do not exist without a substantial subject, prime matter must have a form of its own apart from the substantial form it receives to establish the composite. This is St. Bonaventure's position. Though Ferrara is a bona fide Thomist, his implied acceptance of matter should lead him to a plurality of forms. He seems to flirt with the idea when he distinguishes between the corporeal form that enables a subject to be quantified and through quantity have other accidents and the substantial form that succeeds the corporeal form to make the subject

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<sup>44</sup> St. Thomas, Ibid.

individual. Such plurality is no more than nominal in St. Thomas because he identifies the corporeal form with the substantial form. Ferrara, like St. Bonaventure, speaks of forms understood in matter, which the substantial form terminates in its highest grade. Here he hints at the same progressive generation of matter that demands rationes seminales rather than St. Thomas' education of forms from pure potency. In fine, Ferrara's usage of matter, or rather misuse of the term, in expounding St. Thomas' principle of individuation of material substances is more Franciscan than Thomistic. Assuredly, Ferrara would disclaim this accusation and avow that he accepts prime matter as pure potency. St. Bonaventure, too, claims that his prime matter is pure potency. In the thought of both of these men there is a pollution of prime matter. St. Bonaventure's is blatant. Ferrara's is clearly evident from the twist he gives prime matter by informing it with quantity despite the fact<sup>45</sup> that St. Thomas explicitly singles out quantity as absent from prime matter. He states, also, that it is impossible to posit dimensions in matter without substantial form,<sup>46</sup> because the reception of quantity is dependent upon the reception of the substantial form.<sup>47</sup> But Ferrara overlooks this.

Cajetan represents the only interpretation of St. Thomas' principle of individuation that is consonant with the Thomistic synthesis.

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<sup>45</sup> St. Thomas, In II Sent., D.30, Q.2, A.1, 781.

<sup>46</sup> St. Thomas, De Natura Materiae, II, 201.

<sup>47</sup> St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., I, Q.76, A.6, Resp.



A hundred years later, comparing the conflicting interpretations of Cajetan and Ferrara, John of St. Thomas unhesitatingly points out the flaws in Ferrara's presentation. Matter, he says, is not signed through quantity adhering to matter, but through an intrinsic order of matter to quantity as separating and dividing it. To him, St. Thomas uses quantity more as a term of the signing of matter, to which it has an order, than as a form signing it intrinsically. In this way quantity is a condition and means of connotation of individuation, but matter is the radical principle of individuation. John uses "matter ordered to quantity as dividing it" because division cannot be made without the information of quantity, and quantity, as a disposition, comes from the form. Nevertheless, by reason of its dividing, it precedes the form itself in the genus of material cause - as is often said about dispositions, though in the genus of formal cause it would be just the opposite.

How these potential dispositions may in a certain sense be said to be in matter before the advent of the form demands a subtle explanation. But, according to A. Forest,<sup>48</sup> if we understand this we understand the whole import of the Thomistic doctrine of individuation. Though Forest uses the unfortunate term "incomplete act," an impossible concept, he explains that these dispositions which prepare the matter for the reception of a new form are actually accidents in the substance about to undergo corruption in the generation of a new substance. Keeping in mind that generation is not from any matter but only matter that is disposed for the new form, we will limit

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48 A. Forest, Nature Metaphysique du Concret.

our consideration to dimensions. Dimensions of a substance change in the process of corruption. In changing they make the matter of the substance more suitable for the reception of the new form. When the change actually takes place, there will be similar - but not numerically the same - dimensions in the new substance. The accidents of the first substance are dispositions for the new substance, but since the corresponding qualities of the two substances are not numerically the same, they cannot have actually existed in the matter prior to the form. Since the end of generation is the form of the thing generated, disposing accidents are present in the corrupting subject in view of the new form. Change involves everything but prime matter, which remains throughout generation and is identical in the terminus a quo and the terminus ad quem. That quantity does not remain numerically the same through corruption and generation rebuffs Ferrara's contention. Before the advent of the new form in prime matter, dimensions of the new substance exist in the same way that every other perfection of the completed individual exists, only potentially. Potentiality to quantity is real and distinct from matter's potentiality to substantial form, but it is dependent upon the essential potentiality of prime matter in the same manner that the actuality of quantity rests upon the actualization of the matter by the substantial form.

<sup>49</sup> The new form is educed from the potency of the prime matter of the old composite because it is proportionately disposed in the most immediate degree. Eduction of the new form is the last development of the disposition

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<sup>49</sup> Gerrity, The Theory of Matter and Form., 27 - 30.

of matter. By being signed, matter assumes a decided direction toward the new individual and becomes potentially determined. In this sense only, is the signing prior to the form in existence, because the new form can be received only into matter potentially proportionate to it. In De Principio Individuationis,<sup>50</sup> St. Thomas stresses that the new form enters not an actually but a potentially determined matter. By emphasizing that it is not an actual determination St. Thomas avoids begging the question in the Ferrara fashion. Potential determination points out that the new direction of matter has a relation to a definite quantity, since every determined matter has a certain quantity, a transient spacious indeterminate dimension. This new relation of prime matter is of its essence a transcendental nature, because it produces a new being substantially.<sup>51</sup>

John of St. Thomas lists several reasons why it would be a mistake to imagine that matter is individuated by being signed with actually informing quantity.<sup>52</sup> First, as St. Thomas makes clear in De Ente et Essentia,<sup>53</sup> quantity and other accidents adhere to the whole composite, so assigning actual quantity to matter is false. Secondly, quantity can be actually separate from substance, as the doctrine of the Eucharist testifies. Thirdly, quantity like other accidents is individuated by the substance. Fourthly,

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50 St. Thomas, De Principio Individuationis, 195.

51 Slavin, Basis of Individual Differences, 66.

52 John of St. Thomas, O.P., Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus, Naturalis Philosophiae, Beato Reiser, O.S.B., Marietti, Turin, 1933, Pars III, Q. 9, A. 4, 784.

53 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, C.VI, 56.

informing quantity confers only an accidental existence, not substantial.

Substantial individuation by materia quantitate signata must be through an order to quantity as dividing and separating these parts of matter:

As matter, though not informed with accidents except through the mediating composite; nevertheless has an order to them as to dispositions, by which the potentiality of matter itself is determined in respect to the form of this rather than that, so it has an order to quantity as one of these dispositions. But quantity has not only the office of informing the subject in which it is by giving it the formal effect of quantitative extension, but it also affects it as dividing one portion of matter from another, by which division, placed as a condition, incommunicability and substantial distinction in respect of the matter so divided result, formally not from the quantity, but from the matter itself.<sup>54</sup>

This is substantial division, says John of St. Thomas, and with Cajetan he understands that matter is signed radically by quantity, not because matter alone is the root of quantity - its root is the composite, which is not only matter, but matter informed with a corporeal form - but, matter is said to be signed radically because it comes to be not by having a form itself - it is the composite which has the form - but through an order to quantity as determining and dividing it. That means that by subjecting matter to this division of one form from another in matter, there is produced of matter itself, with this division of quantity placed as a requisite condition, an incommunicable substantial determinateness.<sup>55</sup>

Noting that St. Thomas nowhere says that quantity is the principle of individuation absolutely, but only with restriction as a secondary

<sup>54</sup> John of St. Thomas, Cursus Phil., III, Q.9, A.4, 785.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. John of St. T. refers to Cont. Gent., 65 and Summa Theol., III, 77, 2 & 4, which we have already considered.

principle or more aptly a condition,<sup>56</sup> John of St. Thomas says baldly that "matter alone is the principle of individuation, quantity only concomitantly."<sup>57</sup> Quantity does not formally cause individuation, it accompanies matter and manifests the subject to the senses as designated.

This interpretation of St. Thomas' formula has these salient features which harmonize with the trunk of St. Thomas' thought: matter which makes the subject incommunicable in a substantial principle of individuation, thereby avoiding inextricable difficulties of foisting substantial individuation upon an accident; quantity, executing a minor role in individuation, is laid in its rightful lair as a concomitant and condition of matter, but purely accidental.

Later Thomists, accepting materia quantitate signata as a transcendental relation of matter to quantity, modify quantity with the term "internal." Gredt works the idea into his explanation of the principle of individuation:

In the instant of generation matter by the strength of previous dispositions has an order to the new form and accidents of the new composite, which accidents in the order of the material dispositive cause precede the form and are proximate dispositions to it; and among these accidents quantity as the first accident precedes the others as a disposition to them. Indeed matter is not disposed to this form in number, except as it is disposed to this quantity, just as it is not disposed to this species of form, unless because it is disposed to the accidents which are required by this species. Therefore

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Here John of St. T. averts to Prin. Ind., 196 and Nat. Mat., C.II, 200.

<sup>57</sup> John of St. Thomas, Cursus Phil., III, Q.9, A.4, 785.

matter is already understood as distinct and divided before quantity is present in act, even before the new substantial form about to be generated is present, in that by the strength of previous dispositions it infers and demands this rather than that quantity. By signing of matter so explained, quantity itself is not the principle of individuation, but the condition only, required that matter may perform this function, since those who hold that signing is by a quantity inhering in act make quantity the coprinciple of individuation and then their opinion is reduced to this: that individuation is deduced from some accidental form.<sup>58</sup>

By quantity here Gredt intends internal quantity "because quantity does not concur in individuation because of its magnitude and figure, but in that it is distinct and divided from all other quantity through its position-*ordo partium in toto*."<sup>59</sup> Breaking quantity into discrete and continuous, he observes that discrete quantity has parts numerically distinct by their positions, as individual totalities, and continuous quantity has parts distinguished by position as partial individuals. This is so because quantity, besides the individuation it receives from its subject, has some mode of individuation of its own. In its situs, parts outside of parts, it has in the same species parts distinct among themselves, differing only in position and situs, anyone of which is quantity different in number from any other quantity.<sup>60</sup>

Hitting at the same distinction, Hugon says that matter is individuated intrinsically through the connotation of quantity, i.e., an order to this certain quantity; it is individuated extrinsically through the

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58 Ios. Gredt, O.S.B., Elementa Philosophiae, 4th ed., Herder, Friburgi Briscoviae, 1926, Pars II, C.1, 302.

59 Gredt, Elementa Phil., II, C.1, 302.

60 Gredt, Elementa Phil., II, C.1, 309.

connoted quantity itself.<sup>61</sup> He concurs with Gredt in showing that St. Thomas gives quantity a form of individuation in its own right, since by nature quantity has parts outside of parts so that one part is not another because of differences of position and situs.<sup>62</sup>

To seize upon this characteristic of quantity, as Roland-Gosselin does,<sup>63</sup> to make it a coprinciple with matter in individuation would be to stray from St. Thomas' intention. As he points out repeatedly in Boetius De Trinitate, he means simply that common accidents are not individuated per se, but through quantity which receives its individuation from matter individuated per se.<sup>64</sup> Dimensions are individuated by matter, not by themselves.<sup>65</sup> Accidents cannot be the cause of substance.<sup>66</sup> For this reason Cajetan retracted his interpretation of individuation in De Ente et Essentia.<sup>67</sup> Since quantity is only a property of matter, a potency to quantity would be only an accident and inadequate for substantial individuation. Matter is the principle of individuation; quantity is a normal condition of matter. In conclusion: St. Thomas' principle of individuation of material substance consists in a potential transcendental relation of prime matter to form, which

61 Hugon, Cursus Phil., Phil. Nat., Pars I, Tr. II, Q.4, A.1, 241.

62 Ibid., 242.

63 Roland-Gosselin, Le "De Ente et Essentia" de Saint Thomas d' Aquin, Saulchoir, 1926, 131.

64 St. Thomas, In Boet. De Trin., II, 4; Summa Theol., III, Q. 77, A. 2, c.

65 St. Thomas, In Boet. De Trin., IV, 2, ad 3.

66 St. Thomas, In Boet. De Trin., IV, 2, ad 2.

67 Cajetan, In Summa Theol., I, Q. 29, 1.

when actualized by form, constitutes an individual determined in itself and limited ad extra.

The problem of the thesis is solved. However, related to the interpretation of materia quantitate signata, though not an essential part of it, is the question of St. Thomas apparently indiscriminate use of determined and undetermined with reference to the dimensions of the quantity embraced in his formula. In the next chapter we shall examine St. Thomas' texts and with the help of modern Thomists try to arrive at a conclusion.



CHAPTER VI  
DIMENSIONS: DETERMINED OR  
UNDETERMINED

Keeping in mind that quantity is just a condition of matter in executing the function of individuation, we shall take up as a corrolary whether St. Thomas considers the quantity as determined or undetermined in its dimensions.

At the outset it is important to distinguish between terminate, interminate, and determinate dimensions. Renard does this nicely: Determinate means that the dimensions are definitely these, i.e., distinct from any other, as Paul's dimensions are determinate because they are his and no one else's. Terminate indicates the ultimate dimensions of a body, i.e., so long, so wide and so high. Interminate dimensions means, that though the object has fixed dimensions, we are considering only the fact that it has parts outside of parts.<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas seems to vacillate in his writings on the choice of determinate and interminate dimensions. In De Ente et Essentia he says that by designated matter he means "matter considered under determined dimensions."<sup>2</sup> Maurer speaking in his edition of this work on St. Thomas' principle of numerical individuation, uses the same modification of matter

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1 Renard, S.J., The Phil. of Being, 223.

2 Maurer, C.S.B., On Being and Essence, 14.

that St. Thomas does here, "under determined dimentions," but at the passage cited he notes that in using "determined dimensions"<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas is adopting the terminology of Avicenna, though elsewhere he uses "undetermined dimensions" as Averroes does. Commenting upon the same passage in his edition of the same work, Boyer is unperturbed. He merely observes that St. Thomas' usage is somewhat irregular inasmuch as it does not agree with Boetius de Trinitate and question seventy-six of the first part of the Summa Theologica, intimating a slip or miscopy.<sup>4</sup> On the same incident Roland-Gosselin sees a sharp inconsistancy with a number of other passages.<sup>5</sup>

Distinguishing in De Veritate between materia signata and materia non signata, St. Thomas says that signed matter has determined dimensions, i.e., of these or of those, while unsigned matter doesn't have a determination of dimensions.<sup>6</sup> Later in the same work, St. Thomas states again that matter in the singular is "matter existing under determined dimensions."<sup>7</sup> Similarly in De Natura Materiae he says: "it is impossible that a form be received in matter . . . which matter under certain dimensions is the cause of individuation."<sup>8</sup>

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3 St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, ed. Maurer, 14.

4 St. Thomas, De Ente et Essentia, ed. Boyer, 55.

5 Roland-Gosselin, Le "De Ente et Essentia," 106.

6 St. Thomas, De Veritate, Q. 2, A.7, 49.

7 St. Thomas, De Veritate, Q. 10, A.5, 234.

8 St. Thomas, De Natura Materiae, 201-202.

However, the case of determined dimensions loses when St. Thomas makes it clear in other places that "determined" is expendable. In the Sentences he speaks of the impossibility of understanding different parts in matter, unless there's preunderstood in matter dimensive quantity, at least interminate, through which it is divided.<sup>9</sup> At least leads the reader to draw the inference that though the quantity may be determined in its dimensions, it must be of interminate dimensions at any rate. Further into the same book, he says that the situs and quantity of matter must be determined, but the dimensions of matter must be at least interminate.<sup>10</sup>

Neither Cajetan nor Ferrara examined into the question of determined or undetermined dimensions, possibly through complete agreement, possibly through a complete preoccupation with the role of matter. More modern scholastics of both schools are in agreement on this point. Gredt concedes that the dimensions are interminate.<sup>11</sup> Boyer does too.<sup>12</sup> Though Maquart accuses Boyer of misinterpreting the Summa's I, 76, 6, he agrees on this point.<sup>13</sup> Hugon<sup>14</sup> and Remer<sup>15</sup> concur. Saintonge distinguishes between

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9 St. Thomas, In II Sent., D. 3, Q. 1, A. 4, 97.

10 St. Thomas, In II Sent., D. 30, Q. 2, A. 1, C., 781.

11 Gredt, Elementa Phil., II, 302.

12 Boyer, Cursus Phil., I, Cos., 485.

13 F. X. Maquart, Elementa Philosophiae, Andreas Blot, Paris, 1937, II, 55.

14 Hugon, Cursus Phil., II, 244.

15 Remer, IV, Summa Phil., 72.

determinate quantity and determinate dimensions and agrees to both.<sup>16</sup> All these men point to the passage where St. Thomas makes an issue of dimensions:

Dimensions can be considered in two ways. On the one hand, they can be considered according to a definite size and shape; and thus, as perfect beings, they are placed in the genus of quantity; thus they cannot be the principle of individuation, because such a termination varies in the individual, and it would follow that the individual would not always remain exactly the same. On the other hand, the dimensions can be considered interminate only in the nature of dimension, although they can never be interminate, just as the nature of color cannot be without the determination of white or black; and thus they are placed in the genus of quantity, but only as imperfect. From these interminate dimensions is brought about this matter, signate matter; and thus it individuates the form. Thus through the matter is caused a numerical diversity in the same species.<sup>17</sup>

St. Thomas puts it better than any of his commentators.

Though there is no discordant voice among modern scholastics on interminate dimensions, to allow for expansion and contraction, rarefaction and condensation, it would be misleading to muffle the shouts of opposition on terminate and interminate quantity.

Boyer and Renard, following Ferrara's "quantity informing prime matter," infer that the quantity that signs matter is actual and presume

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<sup>16</sup> Saintonge, Summa Cos., 391.

<sup>17</sup> St. Thomas, In Boetium De Trinitate, IV, 2, 84.

that it is terminate. Gredt<sup>18</sup> and Maquart,<sup>19</sup> rejecting Ferrara for Cajetan, call the quantity interminate. Saintonge, who follows Cajetan on this point, distinguishes between terminate and interminate quantity. Since interminate quantity is without terms, it is nothing more than spacial diffusion. This is the radical principle of numerical individuation in communi, but not of the existential individual.<sup>20</sup>

Hugon disagrees with Saintonge and substantiates Gredt and Maquart. Quantity can be divided into perfect and imperfect, he says. Perfect quantity inheres in a subject and informs that subject as a complement perfected by the substantial form of the composite. This quantity supposes a subject and is not a mode of individuation of that subject but individuated by it. Imperfect quantity prescind from certain terms and figure. Not supposing a subject, it is prior to the subject as a root precontained in the matter of individuation of the subject itself. In this way quantity is called individual per seipsa. From its subject quantity has the characteristic of informing, but on the strength of its own essence, independently of the subject, it demands that it have parts outside of parts. From this there are two parts of quantity and two quantities distinct from each other. Therefore per se through the power of its essence quantity is distinguished.

Quantity, according to Hugon, cannot individuate unless it is

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18 Gredt, Elementa Phil., II, 302.

19 Maquart, Elementa Phil., II, 56.

20 Saintonge, Summa Cos., 391.

determined in the sense that it indicates this in number rather than that. However, this does not entail determination under a certain term and figure. In its last and perfect termination, quantity cannot be determined unless through form, but it can have a determination of situs so that it points to this in number rather than that. And he quotes Salmaticenses:

Determined quantity is one thing, terminate quantity is another. Determinate quantity is quantity as this in number and not that, not caring whether it is completed and terminated through the substantial form, nor whether it has this existence or that, and in this way it is a principle of individuation inasmuch as it is precontained in matter. However, terminate quantity has the same, as posterior to substantial form, through which it is terminated and formed, and similarly it involves in this, nature having a certain existence ("tantitatem"), e.g., 2 by 4. Accepted in this way it isn't the principle of individuation.<sup>21</sup>

So that quantity individuate, an ultimate and complete termination is not required. It suffices that it indicate this in number rather than that. This determination does not come from the substantial form. Through the preceding dispositions matter first pertains in number to this matter before this form in number. Therefore this quantity in number is contained radically in matter before this form in number, and accordingly determination to this quantity in number is prior to the determination of the substantial form.

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<sup>21</sup> Salmaticenses, De Principio Individuationis, Tract. I, D.I, Dub. V, n. 132.

Hugon warns that the distinction between terminate and interminate quantity is of the greatest importance. If through matter signed by quantity is understood matter having complete quantity in act and actually inhering through the manner of an intrinsic and informing cause, matter already signed by quantity is not the principle of individuation as regards esse, but only in regard to demonstration, in as much as it is an inseparable sign of matter. If matter signed by quantity means that matter itself prehas by way of root or foundation, this quantity rather than that, it is the first principle of individuation as to existence.<sup>22</sup>

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Hugon, Cursus Phil., Nat., I, Tract 2, q. 4, a.1, 245.

CHAPTER VII  
HOW MATTER QUANTITATE SIGNATA FITS INTO THE  
THOMISTIC SYNTHESIS

By way of summary the writer of this thesis proposes to show in this closing chapter how the interpretation of materia quantitate signata harmonizes with the basic tenets of Thomistic hylemorphism. Much of what is put here briefly has already been used in the trunk of the thesis to determine St. Thomas' use of the formula. However, sketching the inter-relationship of the principle of individuation and other key theses of Thomistic cosmology will confirm our interpretation of St. Thomas and rule out any other.

Of paramount importance to understanding St. Thomas' philosophy of nature and an isolated phase of it, such as the topic of this thesis, is an accurate grasp of St. Thomas' notion of prime matter. By prime matter, St. Thomas means nothing more than potentiality to substantial form: "Therefore the potentiality of matter is nothing else but its essence."<sup>1</sup> Though it is a real potency to natural forms, it does not exist by itself in nature.<sup>2</sup> Most philosophers agree that prime matter is simply potency, but

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1 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, Q. 77, A. 1, ad 2.

2 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, Q. 7, A. 2, ad 3.



many employing the concept to solve a particular problem of nature let their imaginations overpower them and shift ground. St. Bonaventure discovers a formless matter that actually exists without a form to give it existence. Ferrara conceives of a common quantified, existent through a form of corporeity, upon which different forms supervene to distinguish it.<sup>3</sup> In these cases there is no hope of explaining St. Thomas' principle of material individuation because of the departure from his concept of prime matter.

Endowing prime matter with a form of its own annihilates St. Thomas' contention that the form of a material composite is one, since its act of existence is one and it is form which gives the composite existence.<sup>4</sup> St. Bonaventure's theory of composition conflicts violently with St. Thomas' entelechy. If form gives being absolutely, corruption and generation must be absolute.<sup>5</sup> Ferrara's actually informing quantity cannot be carried through the corruption of one substance and the generation of another. No accidental dispositions come between matter and form, and it is impossible for matter to be quantified before it has being.<sup>6</sup> Even in a mixture forms do not remain actually but only virtually.<sup>7</sup> This is because the unity of a

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3 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 66, 1, c.

4 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 76, 4, Sed contra.

5 Ibid.

6 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 76, 6, C.

7 St. Thomas, Boet. de Trin., IV, 3, ad 6, 91.

thing composed of matter and form is by reason of the form itself, by which it is united to matter as act.<sup>8</sup> A thing's unity results from the same principle that gives it being. Act and potency are so related that no external bond is necessary to unite them.<sup>9</sup> Since form is act and "the reason for the unity by which a given thing is one,"<sup>10</sup> no medium is possible.

Aren't the dispositions a medium? Since generations is only from suitable matter, dispositions precede form, but form at the same time causes dispositions.<sup>11</sup> In no event is there substance emerging ex nihilo, but rather from the potency of matter.<sup>12</sup>

According to Thompson:

The orthodox Thomist thesis is that in a given "substantial mutation," when the disintegration of old substances gives rise to new substances, there is a resolution usque ad materiam primam, so that neither substantial nor accidental forms remain. The basic argument in favor of this thesis is that since there can be only a single substantial form in any composite of primary matter and substantial form, no substantial form will persist through a substantial mutation. From this it follows that no accidental forms can persist, since an accidental form is simply an accident which derives its being from the substantial being. Thus in a substantial change, matter is

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8 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 76, 7, c.

9 St. Thomas, II Cont. Gent., C. 58, Rickaby, 121.

10 St. Thomas, De Spirit. Creat., A. 3, 46.

11 St. Thomas, De Ver., Q. 28, A. 8, 324.

12 St. Thomas, De Pot., Q. 2, A. 8, 64-65.

denuded of all forms, not of course in the sense that it can ever exist in a formless state, but in the sense that all the old forms are replaced by new forms: their disappearance and replacement constitute an indivisible event. It is clear that the entity susceptible of this complete denudation cannot possess any positive properties; it is, therefore, pure potentiality, in other words, pure determinability. It does not seem necessary to add more.<sup>13</sup>

Prime matter is concreated by God as the material principle ex quo of every corporeal composite. In itself it serves to individuate the formal principle that it receives. In the unceasing corruption of one composite and the generation of another, matter again and again exercises the work of individuation. Quantity is always present, because of its nature a material composite is quantified. However, this quantity is no more than a normal condition of matter. In the instantaneous<sup>14</sup> corruption of one composite and the generation of another the same quantity does not persist. Consequently quantity cannot be considered a principle of individuation as matter is. Though, properly speaking, the composite, not the form of the composite, comes into existence,<sup>15</sup> the form comes into being by the fact "that some matter or subject is brought from potency into act; and this is a bringing forth of the form from the potency of matter without the addition of anything extrinsic."<sup>16</sup> Just as a form is educed from the potency of the

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13 Dr. W. R. Thompson, "The Unity of the Organism," The Modern Schoolman, Vol. XXIV, No. 3, March, 1947, 130.

14 Vincent Edward Smith, Philosophical Physics, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1950, 73.

15 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, q. 45, A. 8, ad 1.

16 St. Thomas, De Spir. Creat., A. 2, ad 8.

matter of a composite and joined with the matter in a transcendental union to establish the composite, so it is individuated by that matter.<sup>17</sup>

Individuation of material forms by materia quantitate signata understood in this way fits into the mosaic pattern of Thomistic cosmology. Any other interpretation does violence to St. Thomas' teaching on prime matter, the unicity of form, the union of matter and form, or the education of material forms.

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<sup>17</sup> Petrus Hoenen, S.J., Cosmologia, 4th ed., Aedes Pont. Universitatis Gregoriana, Roma, 1949, 285-287.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Joseph M. Loftus, O.S.M. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

June 1, 1951  
Date

[Signature]  
Signature of Adviser