

SIGER OF BRABANT: THE ETERNITY OF THE WORLD*

Introduction

- 113.4–10 [1] On account of a certain argument, which is believed by some [philosophers] to be a demonstration of the fact that the human species (and in every case the species of all generable and corruptible individuals) began to exist at a time when previously it had not existed at all, a question is raised: whether, following the Philosopher’s method, the human species (and in every case any given species of generable and corruptible [individuals]) began to exist at a time when previously it had not existed at all.
- 113.11 [2] Now the argument mentioned [in §1] can be formulated in two ways.
- 113.12–18 [3] First of all, [the argument mentioned in §1 can be formulated] so that it appears to be more evident, as follows. That species, of which any given individual began to exist at a time when previously it had not existed, is new and began to exist at a time when previously (and in every case) it had not existed. Furthermore, the human species is such—and in every case the species of all generable and corruptible individuals [is such]—that any given individual belonging to species of this sort began to exist at a time when previously it had not existed. Therefore, any given species of these sorts both is new and commenced to exist at a time when previously it had not existed at all.
- 113.18–19 [4] The minor premiss of this argument [in §3] appears evident.
- 113.19–114.21 [5] What is more, the major premiss [of the argument in §3] is established as follows. A species neither has existence nor is caused, except in a singular or in singulars. Therefore, if any given individual belonging to species of generable or corruptible [things]¹ is caused at a time when previously it had

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¹ “If any given individual belonging to species of generable or corruptible [things]”: *si ergo quodlibet individuum specierum generabilium et corruptibilium*. If *generabilium et corruptibilium* be treated as attributive rather than substantive adjectives, the phrase would be translated ‘if any given individual belonging to generable or corruptible species. . .’ However, a similar phrase occurs at 114.35–36 (in §9 below), where B has the alternative reading *et universaliter quaecumque alia universalia generabilium et corruptibilium*.

- not existed, then the species of those [things], it seems, will be of this sort.
- 114.22–31 [6] Secondly, the argument already mentioned [in §1] can be formulated in the way in which it is [in fact] formulated by some [philosophers], as follows. Just as universals do not have existence except in singulars or in a singular, so too neither are they caused [except in singulars or in a singular]. Now what is more, every being is caused by God. Hence since man is caused by God—since it is some being in the world—it is necessary that it will have gone into existence in some determinate individual, just as the sky and whatever else is caused by God. But if man does not have a sempiternal individual, like this sensible sky is [a sempiternal individual] according to philosophers, then the human species will be caused by God such that it began to exist at a time when previously it had not existed at all.
- 114.3–34 [7] Yet although this argument is easy to resolve (since it thwarts itself), nevertheless, because it touches upon a subject worthy of consideration, we intend to treat it for a little bit.
- 114.34–35 [8] We put forward at present four things to be said about the [subject].
- 114.35–37 [9] The first point will be how the human species (and in every case any other [species] of generable and corruptible [things]) is caused.
- 114.35–115.38 [10] Second—following upon the first—there is the response to the argument mentioned previously [in §1], howsoever it be formulated.
- 115.38–40 [11] Third, since the argument mentioned previously [in §1] takes universals to exist in singulars, whether this [claim] is true, and how.
- 115.40–43 [12] The fourth point will be that—since, from assuming that some species begins to exist at a time when previously it had not existed at all, it follows that potency precedes act in duration—it will have to be stated according to the method of philosophy which of those precedes the other in duration, for even this point in itself is difficult.

Chapter 1

- 115.4–5 [13] Regarding the first point, [given in §9 above], it should be known that according to philosophers the human species is only caused by generation.
- 115.5–12 [14] The reason for this [claim in §13] is that, in every case, those [things] whose being is in matter (which is in potency to form) are made through generation, and their [generation] is either *per se* or *per accidens*. Furthermore, from the fact that the human species is caused by God through generation, it follows that [the human species] had not immediately proceeded from Him. But the human species (and in every case of whatsoever [things] the species is in matter), although it is made through generation, nevertheless

is not generated *per se*, but rather only [generated] *per accidens*.

- 115.13–116.17 [15] The [species] is not [generated] *per se*, since if anyone were to attend to these things that come to be, in every case² everything that comes to be, comes to be out of this individual and determinate matter. For although reasons and sciences concern universals, nevertheless operations concern singulars. Now what is more, determinate matter does not pertain to the definition (*ratio*) of the species, and hence [the species] is not generated *per se*.
- 116.17–19 [16] In Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 7.8 [1033^b5–7]), the reason why the form is not generated *per se*, and the composite, which is the species, [is not generated *per se*],³ is the same.
- 116.19–21 [17] (And I call the species ‘composite’ for the reason that, just as Callias from his own nature is this soul in this body, so too animal is soul in body.)
- 116.21–24 [18] Furthermore, the reason—which is common to the form and to the species—that they are not generated *per se* is because the designated matter, out of which generation comes to be *per se* [either] through its transformation from non-being to being or from privation to form, does not pertain to the definition (*ratio*) of either.
- 116.25–26 [19] Yet the human species, although it is not generated *per se*, nevertheless is generated *per accidens*. And this happens as follows.
- 116.26–30 [20] If man, just as it is abstracted from individual matter or from the individual by means of reason, so too would be abstracted in being, then, just as it is not generated *per se*, so too neither [would it be generated] *per accidens*. But since man in its being is this man, [*i. e.*] Socrates or Plato, and Socrates is (a) man, consequently, when Socrates is generated, man is also generated.
- 116.31–35 [21] As Aristotle (*Metaphysics* VII [c.viii 1033a30–33]) says, generating a brazen sphere generates a sphere, because a brazen sphere is a sphere. And just as Socrates is (a) man, and also Plato, and so for the others—from this it [follows] that man is generated through the generation of any given individual, and not only [through the generation] of one determinate [individual].
- 116.36–117.42 [22] Thus, from the remarks already made, it is clear then how the human

² Repunctuating the text as *fiunt, universaliter omne...* rather than *fiunt universaliter, omne...* with Bazán.

³ See §18 for the propriety of the added clause ‘is not generated *per se*’ here. This could also be translated as: “In Aristotle, there is the same *ratio* whence the form, and the composite (which is the species), is not generated *per se*.”

species is held by philosophers to be sempiternal and nonetheless caused. For this is not the case because it would exist abstractly from individuals as sempiternal and in this way caused; nor even is it caused as sempiternal because it would exist in some caused sempiternal individual (like the species sky or an Intelligence [does]); but rather, because in the case of individuals belonging to the human species, one is generated before another sempiternally, and the species has being and is caused through the being and causality of any given individual.

117.43–49 [23] From [§22] it follows that the human species, according to philosophers, always exists, and that it did not begin to exist at a time when it had not previously existed at all. For to say that [the species] will have begun to exist at a time when it had not previously existed at all is to say that some individual belonging to the [species] will have begun to exist, before which there existed no other individual belonging to that species. And since the human species is not caused in any other way, according to philosophers, save as having been generated through the generation of [one] individual before [another] individual, the [species] began to exist.

117.49–52 [24] Even though in every case everything generated begins to exist, still, [the species] begins to exist, since it did exist and previously had existed. For man begins to exist through the generation of Socrates. Still, it exists through the being of Plato, who was generated first.

117.52–57 [25] These points are not incompatible as regards the universal, just as running and not running are not [incompatible] as regards man. Rather, [the proposition]:

Man is running

[is true] through Socrates, and [the proposition]:

[Man] is not running

[is true] through Plato. Nevertheless, in virtue of the fact that Socrates is running, it is not true to say that man, completely and in every case, is not running. So too, although when Socrates is generated man begins to exist, this is not to say that what previously did not exist at all would thus begin [to exist].

Chapter 2

117.4–5 [26] From the foregoing remarks [in Chapter 1], the second point of those [four points] mentioned above [in §§9–12] is apparent, *viz.* the solution of the argument described previously [in §1].

118.6–9 [27] First of all, one should reply to this [argument] (as it is set out in the

first formulation [in §3 above]) by denying the proposition that states that “that species, of which any given individual began to exist at a time when previously it had not existed, is new and began to exist at a time when previously it had not existed at all.”

- 118.9–14 [28] The reason for [the denial in §27] is that even though there is no individual belonging to man without [the individual] having begun to exist at a time when it had not previously existed, nevertheless, no individual belonging to [man] began [to exist] without another [individual] having existed previously, according to philosophers. What is more, the species does not have being only through the being of one of its individuals, but also [through the being] of any other [of its individuals] as well. And so, according to these [philosophers], the human species did not begin to exist at a time when it previously had not existed at all.
- 118.14–17 [29] Indeed, the beginning of the species in being is not only in virtue of the beginning of any given individual belonging to it, at a time when previously it had not existed, but rather [in virtue of the beginning] of any individual belonging to it, at a time when neither it nor another individual belonging to that species had previously existed.
- 118.18–119.28 [30] The argument stated [in §29] is similar to the argument by means of which Aristotle raises a doubt whether past time is finite (*Physics* 4.13 [222^aet seq.]):
- For every past time, whether close at hand or remote, is some then.
And any given then has a limited distance from the present now.
Therefore, the whole of past time is finite.
- Now each of the aforementioned propositions [in the argument] is clear, in virtue of the definition of ‘then’ itself, which the Philosopher teaches [us] (*Physics* 4.12 [219^b2]). What is more, the solution to this argument in Aristotle is [as follows] (*Physics* 4.13 [222^a27–^b6]). Although any given then is finite, nevertheless taking a then before [another] then to infinity is in time; hence the whole of past time is not finite.⁴ For what is composed out of things that are finite in quantity, yet infinite in number, has infinite being.
- 119.28–32 [31] So too, although no individual belongs to man without having begun to exist at a time when previously it had not existed, nevertheless there is [one] individual before [another] individual to infinity, according to philosophers; hence man (according to these [philosophers]) did not begin to exist at a time when previously it had not existed at all, just as time [did] not [begin].

⁴ The argument here is obscure.

- 119.32–34 [32] [The argument in §31] is similar [to the argument in §30], because just as past time has being through any given then, so too the species [has being] through the being of any given individual [belonging to it].
- 119.35–38 [33] One should reply to the formulation of the argument as it is set out in the second way ([in §6 above]) by granting that (*a*) the universal neither has being nor is caused except in singulars; (*b*) every being is caused by God; and (*c*) man is some being in the world and is caused by God.
- 119.38–47 [34] But when [the argument in §6 above] infers [from these premisses (*a*)–(*c*)] “therefore, man went into being in some determinate individual”—it should be stated that this inference draws nothing forth out of the premisses, but rather thwarts itself. For it is first of all accepted that man only has being and is caused in singulars. And it is the case that, for whatever reason it has being and is caused through one [singular], it also [has being and is caused] through another [singular]. From what, therefore, is it deduced that man will have gone into being in some determinate individual? Rather, according to philosophers (as is clear from the remarks), the human species went into being *per accidens*, by the generation of [one] individual before [another] individual to infinity, not in some determinate individual alone, at a time when it previously had not existed at all.
- 119.48–120.57 [35] Accordingly, one should wonder about those [philosophers] arguing in this way. For since they want to argue that the human species began to exist through the making of it, and that [the human species] is not made *per se* but by means of the making of an individual, as they acknowledge, in order to establish their intent they ought to prove that [one] individual is not generated before [another] individual to infinity. Yet they do not establish this, but rather put a falsehood in its place, [namely] that the human species would not be able to be made sempiternal by God, unless it were made in some determinate and eternal individual (as the species heaven is made eternal). And since they do not find anything eternal in the case of individuals belonging to man, they think that they have demonstrated that the species as a whole began at a time when it previously had not existed at all—having been led astray by a worthless argument.
- 120.58–60 [36] However, we are not trying to show here the opposite of the conclusion for which they argue, but only the defect in their argument, which is apparent from the remarks [in §§34–35].

Chapter 3

- 120.3–5 [37] Although the third and fourth points laid out [in §§11–12] above are not completely necessary for the case at hand, nevertheless, because they

are touched upon by these [philosophers], as previously mentioned [in §1], one should address for a little bit those who digress [in this way] regarding these points.

- 120.6–7 [38] Regarding the third point [raised in §11], then, it should be seen whether universals be in particulars, as the argument mentioned above [in §1] accepts.
- 120.8 [39] It seems that [universals] are not [in particulars, for the following reasons].
- 120.8–9 [40] Aristotle says that universals exist in the soul itself (*De anima* 2.5 [417^b23]).
- 120.9–121.11 [41] Themistius, discussing the same passage of Aristotle, [says] that the concepts that are universals are <knowable>,⁵ which the soul collects and stores away in itself ([*Commentary on the “De anima”* 2.5 130.95–96]).
- 121.11–14 [42] And the selfsame Themistius, discussing the beginning of the *De anima*, also [says] that the genus is a certain concept based upon an exact similarity among singulars ([*Commentary on the “De anima”* 1.1 8.22–9.23]). However, concepts are in the soul that conceives. Accordingly, so too are universals, since they are certain concepts.
- 121.15 [43] Yet [there are the following reasons] to the contrary, [namely that universals are in singulars].
- 121.15–16 [44] Universals are universal things (res). For otherwise they would not be said of particulars. Therefore, they do not exist within the soul.
- 121.17–23 [45] Besides, the very thing that is the subject for universality, [for example] a man or a stone, does not exist in the soul. Also, the intention of universality has being in that which is called and denominated a universal. Accordingly, since man and stone are called universals, there is the intention of universality in them. Therefore, either both (*i. e.* the thing and the intention) or neither is in the soul. But if man and stone are not in the soul

⁵ Bazán offers the reading: *conceptus sunt similia quae universalia* . . . , which might be translated “concepts that are universals are similar [things].” But this naturally prompts the question: similar to what? The manuscript V has the reading *universalia sunt conceptus singularium* . . . , which would produce the reading “universals are concepts of singulars.” However, the relevant passage of Themistius reads as follows: “concepts that are universals are knowable, and indeed [the soul] collects and stores them away.” Were the words spelled fully, substituting *similia* for *scibilia* would be an easy manuscript error. Bazán points out that the manuscripts all have a clear abbreviation for *similia*, though. Nevertheless, I propose that we take Siger’s text to have been corrupted early on—perhaps by a simple error in writing, even on Siger’s part—and so read *conceptus sunt scibilia quae universalia*, which is the version translated here.

in that they exist, it seems that neither are they [in the soul] in that they are universals.

- 121.24 [46] The solution [to these arguments is as follows].
- 121.24–25 [47] The universal, in that it is universal, is not a substance, as Aristotle holds (*Metaphysics* 7.13 [1038b9]).
- 121.25–122.32 [48] And this point is also clear as follows. The [universal] itself, in that it is such, differs from any given singular. Hence if it were a substance in that it is such (namely universal), then it would differ in substance from any given singular, and each would be a substance in act, the universal as well as the singular. However, act distinguishes [things]. Accordingly, universals would be substances that are distinct and separate from particulars. For this reason, in Aristotle, universals being substances was the same as their being separate from particulars.
- 122.33–37 [49] But if the universal, in that it is universal, is not a substance, then it is apparent that there are two [items] involved in the universal—namely:
- (a) the thing that is denominated a universal (*e. g.* man or stone), which is not in the soul
 - (b) the very intention of universality, which is in the soul.
- According to (b) the universal, in that it is such, only exists in the soul.
- 122.37–123.44 [50] And this [last] point is apparent as follows. Something is not called ‘universal’ because it exists in the world commonly and abstractedly from particulars of its own nature or by the work of the intellect. For it would not be said of them truly in this way, since it would be separate from them in being. Nor would we require the agent intellect. For the agent intellect does not give to things some abstraction in being from individual matter or from particulars, but only according to the intellect, making the understanding of them abstract.⁶
- 123.44–49 [51] In this way, therefore, for man or stone to be universals is only for them to be understood universally and abstractedly from individual matter, not for them to exist this way in the world. But if they—man, stone, and similar [objects]—have the feature of being abstractly understood only in the soul, then they are therefore in the soul in that they are universals. For it is clear that the abstract understanding of them does not exist in things.
- 123.50–56 [52] And one can also see this point in a similar case. Some thing is called “understood” because being understood or to be understood befalls it. Accordingly, although the very thing, in that it exists, exists outside the soul,

⁶ The last part of this sentence could also be read “but only according to the understanding of them, making the understanding abstract.”

nevertheless in that it is understood (*i. e.* with respect to its being understood) it only exists in the soul. But if for universals to be universals is for them to be understood in this way—*viz.* commonly and abstractedly from particulars—then, in that they are such, they only exist in the soul.

- 123.56–124.60 [53] And this is what Averroës says in his *Commentary on the “De anima”* 3 ([com.18 ll.96–97]): that universals, in that they are universals, are only understood. Furthermore, things that are understood, in that they are understood (*i. e.* with respect to their being understood), only exist in the soul.
- 124.60–61 [54] Accordingly, Themistius also says that universals are concepts ([*Commentary on the “De anima”* 3.5 130.95–96]), according to what has been stated previously ([in §41 above]).
- 124.62–68 [55] Furthermore, one should pay attention to the fact that the abstract and common understanding of some nature, although it be something common—*viz.* the common understanding of particulars—nevertheless is not common as what is predicable of them, in that it has being that is abstracted from them. Rather, the very thing that is understood abstractly and commonly (and consequently is said or signified in this way) is appropriately predicated of particulars, since such a nature exists in things.
- 124.68–70 [56] And because [things] of this sort are commonly and abstractly understood in this way, whereas they do not exist in this way, they are not then predicated of the aforementioned according to the intentions of the genus and the species.
- 125.71–78 [57] It should also be understood that it is not necessary for the universal itself to exist in act in this way before it is understood, in that the universal in act is actually intelligible. Furthermore, the act of the intelligible in act and of the intellective [soul] is one [act], just as the motion of the active and of the passive is one [motion], although the being is different. But the intelligible in potency properly precedes the understanding of it. In this way,⁷ however, it is not universal, except only in potency. On account of this fact, it is not necessary for the universal to have universal being before it is conceived by an understanding, except only in potency.
- 125.79–126.87 [58] Nevertheless, we have seen that some [philosophers] have asserted the contrary of this dictum, by means of the [following] argument. It seems that the very operation of understanding precedes, in the natural order, the object causing that [operation]. Now, however, the universal in that it is universal is able to move the understanding insofar as it is the object of

⁷ That is, as intelligible in potency.

understanding that causes the act. On account of this, it seems to those [philosophers] that the universal is not such in virtue of the fact that it is understood in this way, but rather that, in the natural order, the universal exists before its being understood in this way, as the cause of that very understanding itself.

126.88 [59] The solution to this argument is apparent as follows.

126.88–98 [60] Those [items] in virtue of which the act of the intellective [soul] and the intelligible is caused—and indeed that which is understood is the understanding [itself] in act⁸—are the phantasms and the agent intellect, which in the natural order are antecedent to that act. What we have said about *De anima* 3 would be required [to explain] how those two go together in order to cause the act of the understanding.⁹ But here we should say that the universal is not universal before having been conceived and [before] the act of understanding, at least insofar as it is that act of the agent [intellect]. For the understanding of a thing that is in the possible [intellect], since it belongs to the possible [intellect] as to a subject, belongs to the agent [intellect] as to an efficient cause. Accordingly, the universal does not formally have the feature that it is such, [namely universal], from the nature that causes the act of understanding. Rather, as stated previously ([in §§49–52]), this concept and act is that from which the universal has the feature that it is such, [namely universal].

126.98–127.102 [61] Therefore, universals, in that they are such, exist only in the soul in this way. On account of this fact, they are generated by the nature neither *per se*, nor even *per accidens*, in that they are such. But that nature that is understood universally, and consequently is said [universally], exists in particulars and is generated *per accidens*.

127.103–113 [62] As for the first [argument] to the contrary, [given in §44 above], it should be stated that for universals ‘to be universal things (*res*)’ can be understood in two ways:

(*a*) because they would exist universally

(*b*) because they would be understood universally

Now universals are not universal things according to (*a*), namely such that they would exist in the world, for then they would not be concepts of the soul. But they are universal things according to (*b*), *i. e.* they are universally and abstractly understood. On account of this fact, universals, in that they

⁸ The phrase is obscure, and there is variation among the manuscripts at this point.

⁹ See Siger of Brabant, *Quaestiones in tertium De anima* q.14 (Bazán [1972] 48).

are such, are not said of particulars insofar as they are such,¹⁰ because they are concepts. Indeed, the intention of the species or the genus is not said of the [particulars], but rather the very nature, which is understood in this way, in that it is taken in itself, is said of particulars and is not in the soul.

- 127.114–118 [63] As for the other [argument for the contrary], [given in §45 above], it should be stated that a thing is correctly denominated by something that is not in the existing thing itself. For [a thing] is denominated as ‘understood’ by the understanding of it, which is not in it but in the soul. So too [a thing] is denominated as ‘universal’ by the universal and abstract understanding of it, which indeed exists in the soul, but not in the thing itself.

Chapter 4

- 128.3 [64] Next one should see about the fourth point [laid out in §12 above].
- 128.3–5 [65] Now it is clear that the act precedes potency itself in *ratio*, for potency is also defined through act, as we say a builder is one capable of building.
- 128.5–10 [66] Secondly, act is nonetheless prior to potency in substance and in perfection, in the same [thing] that proceeds from potency to act. For [things] that are posterior in generation are prior in substance and in perfection, since generation proceeds from the imperfect to the perfect, that is, from potency to act.
- 128.10–14 [67] Thirdly, act is also prior to potency in substance and in perfection in that they are considered in diverse [things]. For sempiternal [things] are prior to corruptible [things] in substance and in perfection. However, nothing sempiternal, in that it is such, is in potency, but potency is mixed in with corruptible [things].
- 128.15–16 [68] Yet because there is a doubt here, the question is raised whether act precedes potency in duration or in time, or [whether] potency [precedes] the act itself [in duration and in time].
- 128.17 [69] It seems that act does not precede potency in [duration or] in time [for the following reasons].
- 128.17–129.22 [70] Among sempiternal [things], one is not prior to another in time or in duration. But when the act of some species and the potency for that act are considered according to the species, each is sempiternal. For man is always in act, according to philosophers, and can always exist—whence act, taken according to the species, does not precede potency in time.
- 129.23–28 [71] Besides, among these [things] in which it is the case to take one from

¹⁰ The second ‘insofar as they are such’ refers to particulars *qua* particulars.

another circularly to infinity, it is not the case that [act] is prior in time. Rather, sperm is from a man, and a man is from sperm, to infinity, according to philosophers. Therefore, among these [things], the one is not prior to the other in time. For just as with regard to the sperm out of which a man is generated, there is another prior man who generates, so too the sperm out of which he is generated precedes the man who generates (since he too has been generated).

- 129.29–31 [72] Besides, what is prior in the order of generation is prior in the order of time. But potency is prior to act in the order of generation, since generation proceeds from potency to act. Accordingly, [potency is prior to act] in the order of time as well.
- 129.32–130.46 [73] Besides, there is no reason, it seems, that act precede potency in time, except this: that by means of a power (*potestas*) a being comes about actually through some agent belonging to its own species, [an agent] that exists in act. However, although it follows from this point that the act of an agent precedes in time the act and the perfection of what has been generated by that agent, nevertheless, it does not seem to happen on this basis that the act of generating precedes in time that which is in potency to the act of what has been generated. And act is not even simply antecedent to potency in time on this basis, although some act does seem to precede some potency for that act. For just as a being in potency goes into act through something in act that belongs to its own species, so also [something] actually existing in that species is generated out of something existing in potency to the act of that species—such that, just as that which is potentially a man actually comes about by an actual man, so too a generating man is generated out of prior sperm and a potential man. (And so too, for this reason, the hen precedes the egg in time, and the egg the hen, just as the common man argues!)
- 130.47 [74] For the opposite position, [namely that act does precede potency in duration or in time, there are the following reasons].
- 130.47–50 [75] In *Metaphysics* 9.8 [1049b16–18], Aristotle holds that although in numerically the same [thing] that proceeds from potency to act potency is antecedent to act in time, nevertheless, the same [thing] according to species [and] existing in act precedes potency.
- 130.51–56 [76] Besides, everything existing in potency is brought forth into act through something existing in act. And eventually, in the order of moving [things], it is drawn forth from a mover that exists totally in act, which is not something in potency (*potestas*) before it is in act. Accordingly, due to this point, act seems to simply precede potency in time. And the outstanding Philosopher

was firmly [convinced] on the basis of this argument,¹¹ as now will be clear in its refutation.

- 130.57 [77] Four points should be considered in order to clarify this [argument].
- 130.58–131.62 [78] The first point [of those mentioned in §77] is that what is numerically the same, at times having being in potency and at times [having being] in act, can be in time before it exists. But because the act precedes this potency in something else—since every being in potency in some way goes forth into act from that which belongs to its species—hence this is not simply to say that potency is antecedent to act in time.
- 131.63–70 [79] Second [of those points mentioned in §77]: it should be considered that, (a) if the entire totality of beings was at some time not a being—as some poets, theologians, and some natural [philosophers] have held, and as Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* 12.6 [1071b25–29]—[then] potency simply precedes the act itself. And (b) if some entire species of being, for example the human species, had begun to exist at a time when previously it had never actually existed (as some [philosophers] think themselves to have demonstrated), [then] the potency for the act of that species would simply precede the [act]. But each of these is impossible, according to Aristotle. [The proof of this claim follows.]
- 131.70–76 [80] [With regard to (a) in §79]: It is apparent that (a) [is impossible] as follows. If the entire totality of beings had been at some time in potency, such that nothing at all among beings in act was¹² always actually an agent and a mover, [then] beings and the world would then exist only in potency, and¹³ matter *per se* would go into act—which is impossible. Accordingly, Aristotle holds in *Metaphysics* 12.6 [(1072a1–5)]—and his Commentator [holds this as well] ([*Commentary on Aristotle's "Metaphysics"* 12 n. 29])—that for things to have been at rest for an infinite time and afterwards to be moved is for matter to be able to move of itself.
- 131.77–132.85 [81] [With regard to (b) in §79]: It is also apparent that (b) is impossible [as follows]. Since the Prime Mover and Agent is always actual, not something potential before being actual, it follows that it would always move and act,

¹¹ This phrase is unclear. The text reads: *et super hac ratione fundatus fuit egregius Philosophus*. Yet Godfrey's transcript has simply: *unde super ista ratione fuit fundatus Aristoteles*.

¹² Adopting Barsotti's conjecture of *esset* here, deleting Bazán's comma. Siger's point is that we are to imagine that not even God existed—God, of course, being “always actually an agent and a mover.”

¹³ Perhaps this should be emended to ‘or’ here, which seems to make better sense of the argument.

and produces any given [things] without a mediating motion. Furthermore, on the basis of the fact that [the Prime Mover] is always moving and acting, it follows that no species of being (*species entis*) proceeds to act but that it previously had preceded [it], such that with respect to the same species the [things] that existed return circularly—and laws, opinions, religions, and other [things], so that the lesser [things] cycle in virtue of the cycling of the higher [things], although the memory of the cycling of these [things] does not persist, on account of their antiquity.

- 132.85–86 [82] However, we say these things while reciting the view of the Philosopher, not asserting them as though they were true.
- 132.87–93 [83] It should be noted, furthermore, that some species of being can go out into act even though it only existed in potency, even if it also actually existed at other times. This point is apparent as follows. For it happens that, in the case of celestial [beings], some aspect and constellation that did not exist previously comes to exist, whose proper effect is some species of being in the world below, which is also caused at that time—and, nevertheless, this [species] did not previously exist, just as the constellation causing it [did not previously exist].
- 132.94–133.6 [84] Third [of those points mentioned in §77]: it should be considered that when one takes potency to act and the act leading that potency forth to be of the same *ratio* in the generator and in what is generated, this is not to say, in the [things] taken in this way, that act simply precedes potency nor that potency [simply precedes] act, unless ‘act’ be taken according to species and ‘potency’ be taken as proper with respect to the individual. For actual man and some actual man, especially the generator, temporally precedes that which is the man generated by that capacity. But because in this order, just as a potential being goes out into act through something existing in act (so that in this way act precedes any given potency), so too anything existing in act in this species goes from potency to act (so that the potency precedes any given act in this species)—hence neither simply precedes the other in time, but there is one before the other to infinity, as was argued [in §71].
- 133.7–12 [85] Fourth [of the points mentioned in §77]: it should be considered that, with respect to some order of moving and acting [things], that which proceeds from potency to act must arrive at some act leading that potency forth to act, and this act does not have the feature of going out from potency to act. And hence, although every being in potency goes to act through something in act that belongs to its species, nevertheless not every being in act and generator proceeds from potency to act.

- 133.12–18 [86] From this point [in §85] it follows that, when any being in potency to some act is given, an act belonging to that species in some way (though not according to exactly the same *ratio*) is antecedent to that potency. However, it is not the case that, when any given being in act is given, [some] potency out of which it proceeds to act precedes it. And so act is said to simply precede potency in time, as has been explained.
- 133.19–134.27 [87] Furthermore, I state (as has been explained) that the Prime Mover, leading forth every being in potency to act, does not temporally precede a being in potency (taken in place of prime matter). For just as God always exists, so too, for Aristotle, does a potential man (when it is taken as in prime matter). Also, the Prime Mover does not temporally precede being in potency, when it is taken as in the proper matter considered according to the species, *e. g.* man in sperm. Indeed, it was never true to say, for Aristotle, that God exists, unless a potential man (*e. g.* in sperm) were to exist or have existed.
- 134.27–32 [88] Yet in a third way, which is [different] from the previous remarks, act simply precedes potency in time. For once any being in potency (*e. g.* in its proper matter) is given, the act belonging to that potency, having the feature that it leads the [potency] forth into act, is antecedent in time. However, it is not the case in this [third] way that once a being in act is given, the potency precedes that act in time—as is apparent in the case of the first movers, which lead every being in potency forth to act.
- 134.32–135.40 [89] In the previous remarks [in §88], we are using the first movers as Aristotle does, as though they were species of beings: [beings] that are led by the [first movers] from potency to act. And unless there were beings of this sort¹⁴ in act, which do not go out from potency into act, act itself would not simply precede potency in time. Aristotle pointed this out in *Metaphysics* 9.8 [1050b3–6], saying that act precedes potency in time, adding on the reason for this just afterwards—namely that one act is always taken before another [act], all the way to that [act] that is always the Prime Mover.
- 135.41 [90] The solution to the arguments for the opposite position [in §§70–73] is clear from this [discussion].
- 135.42–50 [91] With regard to the first argument [in §70]: it should be stated that a being in potency is only sempiternal when it is taken as in prime matter. For, taken in its proper matter (according to which something is strictly said to be in potency, as established in *Metaphysics* 9.7 [1049a12–18]), it is new—unless it had been taken according to the species. For just as noth-

¹⁴ ‘Of this sort’: *i. e.* first movers.

ing generated that is corruptible exists for an infinite time, so too nothing generable that is not begotten exists for an infinite time, when ‘generable’ was taken as in its proper matter and in a place close by the generation, as the Commentator says when discussing *De caelo* 1 ([n. 121]).

- 135.51–58 [92] With regard to the second argument [in §71]: it should be stated that, as mentioned [in §84], in the order of generators existing in act, which also proceed from potency to act, there is not a being in act before a being in potency, but one before the other to infinity, according to the Philosopher ([*Metaphysics* 9.7 1049^a12–18]). Nevertheless, since every being in potency, with respect to the essential order of movers and agents, eventually arrives at something existing in act that does not go out from potency into act, it follows from this that, according to that order, act is simply said to precede the potency itself.
- 135.59–136.62 [93] With regard to the third argument [in §72]: it should be stated that, in the case of numerically the same thing proceeding from potency to act, it has been correctly proved that potency is antecedent to act. Still, nonetheless, before that being in potency there is something in act belonging to its species, leading it forth from potency to act.
- 136.63–65 [93] With regard to the last argument [in §73]: it should be stated that act is properly said to precede potency, and so that every being in potency goes out into act through something existing in act. Nor do those two points that are brought forward in opposition [in §73] stand in the way, [for the following reasons].
- 136.65–71 [94] The first point [in §73] does not, because a being in act, leading that which is in potency forth into act, not only temporally precedes the act in what has been generated, but also [temporally precedes] the proper potency to the act of what has been generated—=[namely] in that not only is the act of what has been generated from the generator, but also a being in potency to the act of what has been generated is from the generator as well, *e. g.* semen from man. And in every case, the proper matters are from the Prime Mover, leading any given one forth from potency to act.
- 136.71–78 [95] The second point [in §73] that was brought forward in opposition also does not stand in the way, as is apparent on the basis of the foregoing remarks [in §94]. For although in the order of movers, in the case of which the argument is made, there is taking a being in act before [taking] the being in potency out of which it proceeds to act (just as also before a being in potency there is [taking] a being in act that leads it forth from potency to act), nevertheless in another order of movers it is necessary to take a being in act leading that which is in potency forth into act, despite the fact that

it does not precede the being in potency out of which it comes to be, as is clear on the basis of the remarks already made.

[End of the Treatise]