Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus on Self-Agency and Self-Motion: An Inquiry into the Medieval Metaphysics of Causal Powers

by

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Abstract

In the Physics, Aristotle argues that everything that moves is moved by something else, and thus that things cannot move themselves, in the sense of self-motion that refers not just to changing location, but also more generally to causing a change in oneself. This dissertation focuses on how, working within the framework of Aristotle’s philosophy, Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus defend the possibility of self-motion and self-agency (in contrast to self-motion, in self-agency a thing causes a feature in itself, but there is no temporal moment to which we can assign this causal fact). To understand Henry’s and Scotus’s defences of self-motion and self-agency, I consider their views about causal powers: in any case of causation, including self-motion and self-agency, things do what they do by exercising their causal powers. I argue that Henry and Scotus think very differently about the nature of powers and their causal contribution. Henry takes powers to be without causal efficacy, a view that pushes him to assign to them only an explanatory role, and to argue that in causation, what causes the change and what undergoes the change is the whole thing that has a power. In contrast, Scotus understands powers as forms, that is, as entities that can have direct causal efficacy, and thinks that in causation, what causes the change and what undergoes the change are these forms, which are parts of things. I further explain how Henry’s and Scotus’s views about causal powers are responsible for their different understandings of self-change. Because he focuses on how the whole thing is affected in a
causal interaction, Henry is forced to conclude that in created beings, no perfect self-change is possible, for what starts the change and what ends it are not strictly the same. By focusing on the causal contribution of the parts of a thing, Scotus manages to bypass Henry’s conundrum, and develops an account according to which things can change themselves in virtue of having active and passive principles by whose mutual manifestation a feature is produced by the self-agent in itself.
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Introduction

Change is one of the most familiar experiences we have. We come to be or cease to exist, we move, we lose or gain features, we grow and even decrease. Not only we as human beings undergo such changes, but all living and non-living beings do. Many of these changes are caused in us by other things, but just as many we ourselves seem to cause. Between these two kinds of change, the ability to change oneself seems to be an emblematic feature of living beings, for even the lowest kind of living being changes itself by self-organizing. It is this ability, understood as an ability of self-production or autopoiesis, that, according to some contemporary authors, defines what a living being is. In contrast to a non-living system, the effects of which are outside itself, a living cell produces in itself what is necessary for its sustenance, and in doing so it also produces what is necessary to keep this process of production going.¹ More complex living beings have more complex forms of self-organization. For example, to acquire food or to defend themselves, many living beings can move themselves in different directions with different speeds, and are in control of their motion. Moreover, some people argue that among living beings, humans are such that they can cause their own volitions, an ability that is defined as “a power to cause a certain type of event within the agent: the coming to be of a state of intention to carry out some act, thereby resolving a state of uncertainty about which action to undertake.”² If human beings are able to cause their own volitions, then they must be able to change themselves: they are the source of the change and the change takes place in them.

Ancient and medieval philosophers also recognize the importance of self-change in its many forms. For example, they describe animals as self-movers; they understand metabolic changes as forms of self-motion; some of them even posit that we have an ability to cause our own volitions, that is, that our will can move itself. In contrast to many contemporary philosophers,³ some ancient and

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³ In contemporary philosophy, there are discussions whether the spontaneous decay of radium is a process of self-change. However, the consensus seems to be that it is not. For example, E.J. Lowe notes that: “current scientific orthodoxy has it that radium can also decay ‘spontaneously’ and that when it does so there is simply no prior event which can properly be said to be the cause of the event of splitting: the latter, it is maintained, is a genuinely uncaused event.” See E.J. Lowe, Personal Agency: The Metaphysics of Mind and Action (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 150. (Lowe is not alone in maintaining this view, other contemporary philosophers who argue that the decaying of the radium is uncaused are Brian Ellis and Caroline Lierse. See Brian Ellis and Caroline Lierse, “Dispositional Essentialism,” Australasian Journal of Philosophy 72, no. 1 (1994): 40.) Lowe’s view that the decay of radium is an uncaused phenomenon is motivated by two reasons: first,
medieval philosophers did not assume that the ability to self-change should be closely associated with living beings: for example, some argue that even elements and celestial bodies can move themselves. Although such claims try to make sense of poorly understood physical phenomena, it is a mistake simply to dismiss them as antiquated physical explanations. At their core, these claims are an attempt to explain how even non-living beings can be essentially active and how they can have causal activities which are in important respects similar to those of living beings.

It seems that the belief that things can move themselves, not only in the sense of changing location, but also in the more general sense of being able to change themselves is widely and firmly held. Thus, it is surprising to see Aristotle arguing in the last two books of the Physics that self-motion or self-change is not possible. However, to be fair, Aristotle does not simply deny that animals and humans move themselves, he just maintains that what we perceive as self-motion is not genuine, and, in the end, everything is moved by something else. Stones move because something moves them and things get hot because something heats them. There is an exception to Aristotle’s principle that everything that moves is moved by another, namely the first mover that sets everything else in motion is not moved by anything—but Aristotle is careful to deny that this first mover is itself self-moving.

Why is Aristotle so adamant in rejecting the possibility of genuine self-motion while so many experiences point to its existence? In what is probably his most famous argument against self-motion in Physics VIII.5, 257b6–14, Aristotle’s worry seems to be that for self-motion or self-change to be possible, things must undergo contradictory states at the same time. His argument relies on an intuitive understanding of causation, namely that a thing can change another thing to be in a certain way, if the former is already in that way. Consider the following case: a fire heats a log. The fire heats the log because it is already hot, or, to use the Aristotelian vocabulary, it is actually hot. On the other hand, the log can be made hot if it lacks heat but can receive it, or, to use again the Aristotelian vocabulary, if it is in potency with respect to heat. Given this understanding of causation, if something were to move itself, it would be at the same time in motion but also lacking that same motion. To put it

the spontaneous power of a radium atom is not a power for causing something in something else—he labels causal powers those powers that cause something in something else; second, he does not think that a substance (be it a radium atom or anything else) can simply cause something. For example, the decay of the radium atom is not caused by radium’s power. Instead he argues that for causing something, any substance must act in such a way that what is caused is caused by the substance acting in a certain way, while the acting itself is not caused. So, in relation to the second point, one can say that for Lowe the manifestation of a power—i.e. the action—is not caused by the substance, while the effect of the manifestation is caused. Lowe applies the same analysis to the power of the will, whose manifestation is not caused by the will, while, for example, a certain motion of the arm is caused by the will by its manifestation. See E.J. Lowe, “The Will as a Rational Free Power,” in Powers and Capacities in Philosophy: The New Aristotelianism, ed. Ruth Groff and John Greco (New York: Routledge, 2013), 174.
differently, to move itself, something must be both in act and potency with respect to the same feature, that is, it must both to have and lack that feature at the same time. Aristotle’s conclusion is that since nothing can be both in act and potency at the same time with respect to the same feature, self-motion is not possible.

Aristotle’s argument is sufficiently persuasive to make one have doubts about the possibility of self-motion. For philosophers working within the framework of the Aristotelian philosophy, this impression is strengthened by the pre-eminence of the opposing view, namely the principle that everything that moves is moved by another. This principle is used in *Physics* VIII by Aristotle to show that there is something that moves and organizes the entire universe. If self-motion were possible, the whole order of the universe would be jeopardized. Add to this that defending self-motion, either by extending it to any being or by restricting it to only some beings—for example, humans or angels able to have volitions—has its own perils for a medieval philosopher. The first alternative seems to needlessly complicate our understanding of causation and rob human beings of their special place in the universe; the second alternative makes self-moving beings so special that they cannot be understood in terms of anything else. In short, the case for the possibility of genuine self-motion seems very weak. Thus, it is not surprising that many medieval philosophers sided with Aristotle on the issue of the possibility of genuine self-motion.

Like any good idea, the view that self-change or self-motion is possible has its staunch defenders. This thesis deals with two medieval philosophers who argued for the possibility of self-motion not by rejecting the framework of Aristotle’s philosophy, but by working within it. These philosophers are Henry of Ghent (1217?–1293) and John Duns Scotus (c. 1266–1308). There are many reasons why a discussion of the possibility of self-motion in medieval philosophy should focus on these two philosophers. First, one can hardly find more skillful medieval defenders of self-motion. Henry and Scotus are among the most brilliant minds of medieval philosophy, with highly original views on many topics, especially those concerning the nature of causal powers, agency, and causation. These topics, as I will show in the next chapters, are precisely the ones that need to be addressed if one wants to defend the possibility of self-change. Second, one can hardly find more driven defenders of self-motion. For both Henry and Scotus, defending the possibility of self-motion is of paramount importance, for it is needed to account for the view that our choices are in our power so that nothing internal or external to us can constrain or affect this power. They argue that such a power, if it exists, should be a power for self-motion, given that it is not moved by anything else than itself. Third, there are not many medieval philosophers who are more intricately related than Henry and Scotus.
Contemporary scholars agree that Henry had an important influence on the thought of Scotus, but they also think that we need to know more about the extent of this influence. Given how important and also how difficult it is for Henry and Scotus to defend the possibility of self-motion, a dissertation focusing on their views on the possibility of self-motion will deepen our understanding of the relation between them.

There is another reason why exploring medieval views about the possibility of self-motion, especially those of Henry and Scotus, is a worthwhile undertaking. Offering a solution to the issue of self-motion is not a small philosophical feat, for it requires one to delve into fundamental metaphysical problems about causality, causal powers, and agency, perennial issues in philosophy. When Henry and Scotus try to explain how things can make themselves be in certain ways or have certain features, they embark on a project of reinterpreting some of the fundamental concepts of Aristotelian metaphysics. Understanding such a project is important not only for historians of philosophy, but for anybody interested in the issues of causal powers and causality.

Medieval views about the possibility of self-motion and of self-change are at the centre of several contemporary studies, with many of these studies also addressing Henry’s and Scotus’s views on self-motion. These studies fall into two categories. Some of them approach the problem of self-motion by focusing exclusively on cases in which medieval authors deemed self-motion to be possible. Other studies, very few, address the problem of self-motion by inquiring into its metaphysical underpinnings and focusing on specific cases of self-motion only to the extent that they can throw light on metaphysical issues.

While medieval authors inquired about the possibility of motion in many cases, they seemed to have been especially concerned with three cases: animal motion, elemental motion, and the self-motion of the will. Contemporary scholars writing on the self-motion problem have mostly focused on the last two cases. The discussion of the possibility of elemental motion owes a lot to Anneliese Maier’s framing of the issue. In her article “Die Ursache der Fallbewegung,” Maier argues that it is Averroes’s interpretation of the issue that sets up the framework for the medieval debate about elemental motion. More precisely, she refers to two suggestions that Averroes makes, namely, (I) that the problem of elemental motion is not about why elements move themselves, but why they continue

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moving once they are moved, and (2) that what accounts for the continuation of elemental motion must be something intrinsic to an element, namely its internal features (its qualities or its powers).\(^5\) Maier’s understanding of the issue elicited a series of responses that question Averroes’s interpretation as a correct interpretation of Aristotle’s position on elemental motion.\(^6\) For example, James Weisheipl argued, not very successfully, that medieval philosophers, who followed Averroes, were mistaken in understanding the Aristotelian principle from \textit{Physics} VII.1, “omne quod movetur ab alio movetur” to say that “everything that is moving must be moved by something here and now conjoined to the moving body.”\(^7\) The principle says only that that which starts moving needs to be put in motion by something else, not that anything that moves needs to be helped to keep moving.\(^8\)

The main problem with these studies is that they misconstrue the debate because they avoid discussing the underlying metaphysics of the issue of elemental motion.\(^9\) Weisheipl tries to address this shortcoming but his explanations remain confused. Although he correctly notices that an aspect of the debate concerns the different ways the authors involved understand the causal contribution of


\(^{8}\) Ibid., 81–82. Scotus offers another explanation for why one needs to presuppose that the substantial form of the heavy body is the efficient cause of its falling down—“any effect as long as it is actually caused, has its cause in actuality” (See John Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} (=\textit{Ord}.) II, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 453 in John Duns Scotus, \textit{Opera omnia}, ed. Commissio Scotistica (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950)., 358). So Scotus posits the substantial form as an efficient cause because of the Aristotelian view that the cause must be simultaneous with the effect. (All references to the Vatican Opera Omnia will be indicated with “Vat,” volume number, and page.)

\(^{9}\) Another problem might be the misinterpretation of Averroes’s position. For a more nuanced interpretation of Averroes’s position, see Richard F. Hassing and Edward Macierowski, “Latin Averroes on the Divisibility and Self-Motion of the Elements,” \textit{Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie} 74 (1992): 156–57.
causes and principles, he never explains why the forms of elements can be principles but not efficient causes. More precisely, it remains unclear why, although Aristotle might not need to posit a substantial form as an efficient cause, many medieval philosophers did just that. Moreover, Weisheipl insists that the central issue in the debate over the possibility of self-motion is an alleged contradiction between maintaining the Aristotelian principle of “omne quod movetur ab alio movetur” and defending the possibility of self-motion. But this is not so. The possibility of self-motion does not jeopardize the Aristotelian principle because even the self-moving heavy and light bodies need to be brought into existence by something.

The self-motion of the will is probably the topic that has attracted the most attention from contemporary scholars due to their interest in the problem of free will. Most if not all medieval thinkers believe that human beings are free agents, and thus can cause their own choices. However, they often disagree about what accounts for our free choices: are human beings free simply in virtue


12 Scotus, Ord. II, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 470 (Vat. 7: 367); “Non enim oportet quod 'si omne quod movetur, ab alio movetur', quod in omni motu moveatur ab alio. […] Et sufficit Philosopho, quia per hoc devenitur ad aliqvd 'aliud ab omnibus istic', quod nee in uno motu, nee in quocumque, poterit moveri ab alio, sed est omnino 'movens immobile’.”

of their ability to think, or are they free because there is in them a self-determining power for free choices? Many might wonder what is at stake here, for we associated both thinking and making choices with being free, and we do not see why someone would prefer that one is more fundamental than the other. However, for medieval theologians, thinking and making choices are associated with two different faculties of our soul: the intellect, which is oriented towards what is true, and the will, which is oriented towards what is good. Given this setup, if the intellect’s function is just to get the things right, and if our freedom consists in following our intellect’s decision and does not imply that the will is able to reject them, then our morally right choices are due to our knowledge, and our morally blamable choices are due to our ignorance. So the worry is that if what accounts for our freedom is only our ability to think, then we end up with an implausible view according to which people always make bad choices because they do not know better. This was an important worry for medieval thinkers, as is evident from the text of the Condemnation from 1277.\textsuperscript{14} This text contains some condemned articles that deal with freedom and the relation between the will and the intellect. Among the most relevant ones, are the following “That the will necessarily follows what is firmly believed by reason, and that it cannot abstain from that which reason dictates. This necessitation, however, is not coercion but the nature of the will” (article 163);\textsuperscript{15} “That after a conclusion has been drawn about something to be done, the will does not remain free, and punishments are not put forward by law only for the correction of ignorance and in order that the correction be a source of knowledge for others” (article 158).\textsuperscript{16}

Although the self-motion of the will might appear to be the case best suited to offer insights into the intricate problem of the possibility of self-motion, in reality it leaves many issues unresolved. More precisely, the self-motion of the will cannot offer much insight either into the other, more mundane cases of self-motion, namely the self-motion of animals and elements, or into the broad metaphysical issues concerning self-motion. The reason is that the discussion of the self-motion of the will is about the possibility of self-motion in an \textit{immaterial} being—the will is a power of the immaterial soul. This way of framing the problem, however, has two consequences. On the one hand, because the will is a power of an immaterial being, the explanation for the will’s ability to move itself

\textsuperscript{14} For the text of the condemnation see David Piché, \textit{La condamnation parisienne de 1277: Nouvelle édition du texte latin, traduction, introduction et commentaire} (Paris: Vrin, 1999).
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 126.
does not lend itself to being easily generalized to the case of material self-movers. On the other hand, once the question concerning the self-motion of the will is framed as a question concerning the ability of an immaterial being to move itself, medieval authors can leave the Aristotelian framework and avail themselves of Neoplatonic considerations. For example, they use considerations about the self-motion of immaterial things from Macrobius’s *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, or Proclus’s *Elements of Theology*. Indeed, the influence of the Neoplatonic tradition is evident in some early authors such as Walter of Brugges or John Peckham, but also in later ones such as Peter John Olivi or Henry of Ghent. Studies that deal exclusively with the problem of the self-motion of the will usually do not address how these Neoplatonic considerations fit with Aristotelian concepts, especially those of act and potency.

The most promising way to understand how some medieval authors defended the possibility of self-motion is to examine not how these authors defended the possibility of self-motion in specific cases, but what they say in general about the possibility of self-motion. John Duns Scotus is probably the most systematic medieval philosopher who addresses the problem of the possibility of self-motion in this general manner. In book IX of his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, after clarifying the Aristotelian concepts of potency and act, Scotus raises the question whether something can move itself. In answering this question, he leaves aside any considerations about the material or immaterial nature of a self-mover, and focuses entirely on fundamental concepts of Aristotelian metaphysics such as the concepts of potency, act, action, and passion.

Given Scotus’s solution to the self-motion problem, it is not surprising that the contemporary studies dealing with the general problem of self-motion have focused on his view. Among these

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19 On Neoplatonic influences in the discussion about self-motion of the will, see especially Stadter, *Psychologie und Metaphysik der menschlichen Freiheit*. 
King addresses Scotus’s views on self-motion by inquiring into the metaphysical concepts underpinning his views. He argues that Scotus’s defence of self-motion relies on understanding potency as a principle, that is, as a causal power. A self-moving thing has suitably connected active and passive potencies for the bringing about of a feature in itself. By understanding these potencies as principles that can come together to manifest themselves, Scotus is committed to the view that self-motion is what happens when a thing’s active and passive principles are in adequate proximity, not impeded, and manifest together. Although King’s interpretation is correct, Scotus’s defence of self-motion makes one wonder about two issues. On the one hand, there is the question about the novelty of Scotus’s understanding of potency as a principle. Prima facie, there does not seem to be anything new about this interpretation: medieval philosophers usually consider potencies to be principles of action. So what is it about Scotus’s interpretation of this concept that allows him to go where not many before him have gone and say that self-motion is possible? On the other hand, there is the question about the array of conceptual changes that Scotus introduces to defend the possibility of self-motion. As in any case of change, in self-motion there are principles, but also agents, actions and passions. We know that Scotus relies on a certain understanding of the term ‘potency’ to argue for the possibility of self-motion, but does he also reinterpret other fundamental metaphysical concepts?

Since this dissertation aims at answering these questions, it will focus on those conceptual changes that Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus make to argue for the possibility of self-motion and self-agency. Before explaining in more detail what changes I will focus on, let me very briefly explain the concept of self-agency. While self-motion is a case in which at a certain moment in time a thing brings about in itself a feature, self-agency is a case in which a thing must have caused a feature in itself, but there is no temporal moment at which we can pin down this causal fact. To put it differently, while self-motion is a case of causation that pertains to natural philosophy, self-agency can be better described as a case of causation that pertains to metaphysics: something is purported to be able to bring about something else in itself without requiring any motion or taking any time. Both

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21 For example, Thomas Aquinas says in many places that potency is a principle of an action and/or of an effect. See for example Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae (=ST) I*, q. 25, art. 1 ad 3 in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologicae, cura et studio Instituti Studiorum Medievalium Ottomanis ad lectum S. Pii Pp. V'iusu conjectum recognita* (Ottawa: Commissio Piana, 1941), 172a.: “ad tertium dicendum quod potentia in rebus creata non solum est principium actionis, sed etiam effectus.”
Henry and Scotus defend the possibility of such a kind of causation, and both do it in the context of their discussion about the possibility of self-motion. The reason is that these two cases share important similarities: both are about how it is possible for a thing to cause a feature in itself, and so both are problematic given Aristotle’s arguments against self-motion.

This dissertation approaches Henry’s and Scotus’s defence of self-motion and self-agency through the concept of causal powers, for self-movers and self-agents do what they do through their powers. We already know from medieval discussions and contemporary studies that the concept of potency is central in the debate about the possibility of self-motion and self-agency. Although it is not always clear what is meant by this concept, when it is clear, it is usually understood that a potency is a principle or causal power. What we do not know sufficiently, and what this dissertation attempts to show is how some aspects of Henry’s and Scotus’s understanding of the concept of potency, in the sense of a causal power, help them to mount a defence of self-motion and self-agency. More precisely, there are three aspects of these two medieval authors’ understanding of causal powers that will be discussed at length: the nature and ontological status of causal powers, their causal contribution in causation, and their relation to possibility.

Even without knowing the views of Henry and Scotus about these three aspects of causal powers, it makes sense to expect that how one envisages the nature and ontological status of causal powers, their causal contribution, and their relation to possibility plays a major role in one’s understanding of causation, and so of self-motion and self-agency. Let me start with why the nature and ontological status of causal powers matter for explaining the possibility of self-motion. According to Aristotle, if genuine self-motion were possible, self-movers would move themselves as a whole; but at the same time that they move and are moved, they would do it in virtue of distinct powers or features. For a defender of self-motion and self-agency, this poses a problem: how can something move itself as a whole? To address this problem, the nature and ontological status of causal powers need to be conceived so that one is allowed to say at the same time that (1) in virtue of distinct powers, a self-agent or self-mover acts and is acted upon, moves and is moved, and (2) when it does this, it is the same one whole thing that acts and is acted, moves and is moved. Of course, some kinds of entities are better suited to fulfill these requirements than others.

Understanding the causal contribution of causal powers is relevant for understanding the role of agents and patients in self-motion and self-agency. Active and passive powers are associated with actions and passions, agents and patients: a self-agent or self-mover is a thing that at the same time
acts in virtue of its ability to act and receives what it produced in virtue of its ability to receive—a self-agent or a self-mover is both an agent and a patient. But if genuine self-motion and self-agency are possible, that is, if things can move themselves as wholes, how should one think about the agency of these things? According to a plausible view, nothing becomes an agent or a patient unless there is something else that is brought about or received; that is, to explain the constitution of an agent and patient we need to refer to an entity different from that to which we attribute the action or the passion. This understanding of how agents and patients are constituted is in tension with the intuition that self-motion and self-agency are about what happens in things independently of what happens outside them.

What relevance do one’s views about the relationship between power and possibility have for how one explains self-motion and self-agency? When medieval authors explain change, they refer to powers and possibilities. However, while powers can be principles, can do something, and can bring about or receive something, possibilities cannot do any of these. Even if one might attribute to what is possible a kind of existence, it is not clear that such an entity can have a causal contribution. Thus, one’s explanation of change, and so of self-motion and self-agency, would look very different depending on whether one appeals to powers or possibilities. Add to this that although people take powers and possibilities to be related (in many cases, what is possible for us is also what we can do), they might envisage the relation between them quite differently. For example, one might think that powers are reducible to possibilities because what it means for a thing to have a power is just that it is possible for that thing to be in a certain way: to say that heat has a power to heat is just to say that it is possible for heat to heat other things. On the contrary, one might think that powers account for why it is possible for things to be in a certain way. To say that heat has a power is to say that heat has a certain nature that accounts for why it is possible for heat to heat other things. Others might point out that the connection between powers and possibilities is far from obvious. To have a power for \( \phi \) is not reducible to the possibility of being in a certain way nor does it ground this possibility since it is not clear that the power is sufficient for the possibility. Consider a pot that has a power to receive heat: is the presence of this power sufficient grounds to say that it is also possible for the pot to become hot? There are many reasons why the pot might never become hot: for example, each time the pot is near a source of heat, something prevents it from getting heated. These different ways of understanding the connection between power and possibility will result in further differences in how causation is explained, and so also in how self-motion and self-agency is explained.
This thesis is organized in three parts. The first part aims to establish why an inquiry into the possibility of self-motion needs to focus on one’s view about causal powers. In chapter 1, I do this by discussing the case of self-agency. I argue that the self-agency view, namely the view that things can cause some of their features without motion or time, tries in fact to explain the peculiar relationship between the essential and necessary features of a thing. Once I have shown this, I inquire into how self-agency is similar to self-motion to show that their similarities allow us to better see what is at stake in the problem of the possibility of self-motion. In chapter 2, I discuss Aristotle’s views about self-motion, both his arguments against the possibility of genuine self-motion—more precisely, his three arguments against self-motion from the last two books of *Physics*—and his explanation about the kind of self-motion he allows for. The aim of this chapter is primarily to show what philosophical problems confronted the medieval philosophers who tried to defend or reject Aristotle’s view on self-motion.

In the second part, I focus on Henry of Ghent’s and John Duns Scotus’s views about causal powers, namely their causal contribution, their nature, and their ontological status. Discussing these issues is necessary because what a self-mover or self-agent does, it does in virtue of its causal powers. So causal powers seem to be the bedrock of understanding the possibility of self-motion and self-agency. I start in chapter 3 with an inquiry into the causal contribution of causal powers; more precisely I will focus on what Henry and Scotus say about the relationship between powers, principles, and causes. The main question that this chapter addresses is whether powers themselves cause something or only allow something to have a causal contribution. Henry and Scotus favor different answers to this question and I show that these different answers lead to different views about what happens in causation. Chapter 4 uses the findings of chapter 3 to inquire into the nature and ontological status of powers. At the centre of chapter 4 is the question of how powers are related to their bearers. To answer this question, I first engage with a view about the nature of causal powers that had a lot of traction in the Middle Ages, namely that of Thomas Aquinas. Following Aristotle, Aquinas defends an intuitive view of causal powers, conceiving them as qualities that enable something to act in a certain way. But because a quality is really distinct from that which it qualifies, he is forced to take potencies or powers to be really distinct from their bearers. But how can something move itself or act on itself as a whole if its powers are distinct from it? Thus, to defend the possibility of self-motion and self-agency, the straightforward solution is to deny that powers are really distinct from their bearers. This is the direction that both Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus take; they argue that potencies or causal powers, although they are in some way distinct from their bearers, are still not
really distinct from them. However, they are now confronted with another problem, namely what exactly are powers if they are not qualities of their bearers?

In the third part, I put to work the insights about causal powers to see how they are used by Henry and Scotus in their defence of the possibility of self-motion and self-agency, namely in their replies to Aristotle’s arguments against self-motion and self-agency, arguments that are discussed in chapter 2. In chapter 5 and 6, I discuss how these two medieval authors answer Aristotle’s argument that no self-mover can move itself as a whole. Because this argument involves the concepts of part and whole, the ontological status of the causal powers of a self-mover becomes relevant. Since both Henry and Scotus make powers the same as their bearer, one would expect that they would not have problems in rejecting the argument. However, I show that other considerations about the nature of powers and their causal contribution explain Henry’s and Scotus’s different attitudes towards the Aristotelian argument: Henry agrees with the traditional position that the argument applies only to material self-movers, while Scotus denies this. In chapter 7, I discuss how Henry and Scotus address Aristotle’s most well-known argument against self-motion, namely, his argument that nothing can move itself because nothing can be in both act and potency at the same time with respect to the same thing. My focus in this chapter is on why Scotus gives a different account of the possibility of self-motion than the one Henry offers. I argue that the differences between these two authors boil down to their different views about the causal contribution of powers and the relationship between powers and possibility. In chapter 8, I discuss the replies of Henry and Scotus to Aristotle’s third argument against self-motion, an argument that requires dealing with four important concepts: action, passion, agent, and patient. It is in this chapter that one can easily see the differences between Henry’s and Scotus’s approaches to the problem of self-agency and self-motion. Again, what plays a role in their different views is their different understandings of the causal contribution of powers to an action or a passion.
Chapter 1 The Medieval Problem of Self-Agency

When something changes, we usually say that it does because another thing causes it to change. Some ancient and medieval philosophers understood many cases of change as cases of self-change. In self-change, a thing changes because it causes itself to have a certain property or feature; it does not change because something other than itself causes it to change. For example, in ancient and medieval philosophy, the locomotion of animals, the ability to cause one’s own choices, and sometimes even the process of metabolic change are understood as cases of self-change. One might find these views unproblematic: all these cases have to do with living beings and living beings do seem to be able to change themselves. But ancient and medieval philosophers attribute self-change to lifeless beings as well. For example, some argue that the four Aristotelian elements and even the celestial bodies can move themselves. Specifically, among medieval philosophers, a stranger case of acting on oneself is discussed.

In *Quodlibet* XI, q. 6, which inquires into whether something can reduce itself from potency to act, that is, whether something can move itself, Henry of Ghent remarks:

> [Text 1] There is no problem in something actualizing itself, with respect to both its proper and its common accidents. Some doubt this and say that there does not seem to be much difficulty concerning proper and inseparable accidents because the subject is the agent cause of its accidents. [...] But (as they say) this seems to be entirely absurd about the separable and common accidents.¹

Things have different kinds of features. Some are necessary or proper to them; for example, fire is necessarily hot, and stones are necessarily heavy. There are also other features that are normal for them, but they do not have them necessarily; for example, stones sometimes fall, human beings sometimes will to go to a movie, etc. In [Text 1] Henry says what medieval philosophers think about the view that things can cause their own features: while some medieval philosophers consider absurd the view that things can cause those features that are only normal or common to them, almost all recognize as plausible the case in which things cause their proper features. In what Henry suggests is

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a widely accepted case, a thing is the cause of its necessary or proper features. I will refer to this as a
case of self-agency; I retain the term ‘self-motion’ for the case in which a thing causes features that
are only normal for it. It is surprising, however, to read that many medieval philosophers consider
self-agency a more plausible case than self-motion. While it is easier to see what it means to say that
some beings, for example, living beings, are self-movers, it is difficult to understand what it means to
say that something is a self-agent. To see better why self-agency is puzzling, just consider heaviness, a
proper feature of stones (stones are always heavy). If stones are self-agents, then stones cause their
own heaviness. But what does this even mean? Moreover, if a thing always has its proper features—
this is what being a necessary feature means—what need is there for a thing to cause such features?
It already has them.

Usually when contemporary scholars discuss medieval views of self-change, they pay little or
no attention to the case of self-agency. One reason might be that it is easier to understand what
motivated medieval philosophers when discussing locomotion, metabolic self-change or the self-
motion of the will. Consider the case of the self-motion of the will, a case that is at the core of the
whole debate about the possibility of self-change in the medieval period. The issue at stake is whether
the will brings about an act of volition in itself, or it is something else that brings the act about. The
motivation is quite obvious: were the act brought about by something other than the will, then one
might argue that we are not free, for the act of volition is not in the power of the will. In the self-
agency case, it is less obvious what the motivation is for defending such a case of causation. It is no
wonder then that some scholars have denied that medieval philosophers maintain the self-agency view.
For example, in explaining how medieval philosophers think about the relation between the essential
features of a thing and its accidental ones, Richard Cross says:

[Text 2] [A] substance does not (at least under standard circumstances) cause its accidents,
and it is not in any sense part of the set of causal conditions for its accidents. [An] accident is
seen as active, and its substance passive: an accident actualizes a liability—a passive potency—
in its substance. Conversely, [...] a substance is seen as active, non-causally sustaining its
accidents in existence.²

² See Richard Cross, The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 35. Cross argues that the relation between a substance and its accidental feature should be understood in terms of existential dependence: “[For] an accident to depend on its substance is for the existence of the substance to be a necessary condition for the existence of the accident. We will go wrong if we think of this condition as in any sense causal.” It is unclear to me what Cross means by “standard circumstances.”
In this chapter, I suggest a way to make sense of the view that posits the possibility of self-agency. I will argue that the positing of self-agency is a solution proposed especially in the thirteenth century to the question concerning the nature of the dependence relation between what is accidental and what is essential. I start by analyzing two important concepts that are the core of the debate about self-motion and self-agency: the essential and the accidental (and its variants). Next, I will discuss different ways in which the relation between the essential and the accidental can be understood: by appeal to existential dependence, logical implication, or causation. It is the last of these that is the solution preferred by many medieval philosophers. To make sense of the causal approach I will discuss the case of Thomas Aquinas. The discussion of Aquinas’s position will also show that Henry is right in assuming that there is some consensus about the possibility of self-agency. Finally, I explain why self-agency is an issue that throws light on the medieval debate about self-motion.

1.1. Preliminary Notions: The Essential and the Accidental

Consider the following propositions: “Socrates is a rational being,” “Socrates is able to learn grammar,” “Socrates is tanned,” and “Socrates is male.” In each of these, something is predicaded of Socrates: ‘rational being’, ‘able to learn grammar’, ‘tanned’ and ‘male’. But what is said is different in a metaphysically important way. When ‘tanned’ is predicated of Socrates, it is only something accidental that is said about him—Socrates can be tanned today, but pale some weeks later, yet remain Socrates, that is, a rational being. What is accidental to a thing is a feature that a thing can lack or lose while remaining essentially the same. This implies that accidental features—or, to use the Aristotelian vocabulary, accidents—are not necessary for a thing to be what it is. On the other hand, when ‘rational being’ is predicated of Socrates, something essential is said about him—what Socrates is, his essence is to be a rational being. Indeed, essential features explain what something is, they make up the definition of something (as Aristotle argues in Topics I.5, 102a3 and Metaphysics VII.3, 1029b14). What is essential is not only a feature in virtue of which a thing is what it is, but also a feature in virtue of which a thing remains what it is. If to be a rational being is essential for Socrates, then he cannot lose this feature and still remain Socrates. Thus, while what is accidental refers to a simple qualification of
a thing that can be lost without the existence of the thing being jeopardized, what is essential refers to what a thing is and what is necessary for that thing to have if it is to persist at all.³

‘The ability to learn grammar’ is different from both the kind of accidental features described above (call them simple accidents) and essential features. In medieval philosophy this feature is called a proprium and corresponds to the properties Aristotle calls idia.⁴ According to Porphyry’s famous Introduction, there are four senses of proprium or ‘property’:

[Text 3] They divide property into four: (1) what is an accident of a certain species alone, even if not of it all (as doctoring or doing geometry of man); (2) what is an accident of all the species, even if not of it alone (as being biped of man); (3) what holds of it alone and of all of it and at some time (as going gray in old age of man); and (4) fourthly, where ‘alone and all and always’ coincide (as laughing of man). For even if man does not always laugh, he is said to be laughing not in that he always laughs but in that he is of such a nature as to laugh—and this holds of him always, being connatural, like neighing of horses. And they say that these are properties in the strict sense, because they convert: if horse, neighing; and if neighing, horse.⁵

Although only the last sense of property is considered the proper sense of a proprium, we should note that medieval philosophers, especially those discussing the origin of propria from a metaphysical perspective are not always clear in what sense they understand this term. Taking proprium in the last sense, it is very easy to see how such a feature differs from simple accidents and essential features. It is different from simple accidents, because it applies to all members of a certain species and always: any human being is, in principle, able to learn grammar. Simple accidents such as ‘tanned’ do not necessarily apply to all members of the species (Plato might never be tanned) and even when they

³ On the distinction between the essential and the accidental see besides the texts mentioned in the other footnotes, Irving M. Copi, “Essence and Accident,” Journal of Philosophy 51, no. 23 (1954): 706–19; Teresa Robertson and Philip Atkins, “Essential vs. Accidental Properties,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed September 20, 2016, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/essential-accidental/; Michael Gorman, “Essentiality as Foundationality,” in Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives in Metaphysics, ed. David Novotny and Lukas Novak (New York: Routledge, 2014), 119–36. Note that the discussion in contemporary philosophy is about whether essential features are to be characterized in modal terms (i.e. as those features that are necessary for something to be or those features without which something cannot be) or in non-modal terms (i.e. as those features that explain what something is). In defining the essential I have used both approaches; however, I take the non-modal account to be the more important, and in fact the more appropriate for medieval discussions.

⁴ This kind of property is discussed by Aristotle in Topics I.6, 102a18–30. Propria are also discussed in Categories 3a21, 4a10; An. Post. I.4, 73a 34-b2; Top. V.5, 134a5–135b6.

apply to a member, they do not apply at all times (Socrates is tanned today, but he might not be in a few weeks). *Propria* are also distinct from essential features. Essential features are basic, and not derivative of any other more basic features of a thing; they enjoy priority in any account of what that thing is or its definition. In contrast, *propria* are derived from these essential features or they come or follow from these essential features. On the one hand, their derivative nature explains why *propria* do not figure in the definitions of things: they are not the basic essential features of a thing. On the other hand, their derivative nature also explains why they are necessary features of things: they are derived from the essential features, features that a thing cannot lack or cannot lose without being destroyed.

‘Male’ is what medieval logicians call an inseparable accident. Such an accident shares more similarities with a *proprium* than with a simple accident. Like a *proprium* or a proper accident, an inseparable accident is derived from the essential features of a thing. For example, according to Aristotle’s embryology, the offspring of a living being becomes male or female in virtue of the male sperm being able or not to master the matter provided by the female fluid. This means that the male sperm which is responsible for the soul of the animal is also responsible for its sex, but only because of how it reacts to the female fluid. In metaphysics, Aquinas tries to capture the same point when he says that an inseparable accident of Socrates, such as being male, follows primarily from Socrates’s matter, but only in virtue of its relation to Socrates’s specific form—his having a soul. If Socrates were not a living being but a stone, then Socrates would not be male. In contrast to a *proprium*, an

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7 See Cooper, “Metaphysics in Aristotle’s Embryology.”

8 See Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*: “Quaedam enim accidentia consequuntur materiam secundum ordinem, quem habet ad formam specialem, sicut masculinum et femininum in animalibus, quorum diversitas ad materiam reducitur, ut dicitur in X metaphysicae. Unde remota forma animalis dicta accidentia non remanent nisi aequivoce.” Aquinas talks about a second kind of inseparable accidents; these inseparable accidents follow from matter in virtue of other general features. Ibid., 380.81-86: “Quaedam vero consequuntur materiam secundum ordinem, quem habet ad formam generalis, et ideo remota forma speciali adhue in ea remanent, sicut nigredo cutis est in Aethioppe ex mixtione elementorum et non ex ratione animae, et ideo post mortem in eis remanet.” For example, being black is not an inseparable accident that depends on the kind of soul or form an Ethiopian has, but on the influence of the environment, which affects the elements in the sperm. See Cooper, “Metaphysics in Aristotle’s Embryology.” Note that Cooper criticizes another interpretation, namely that of David Balme, according to whom accidental features such as colour of the skin, eye, hair, etc. are in fact contained as potential properties in the sperm.
inseparable accident does not need to pertain to all members of a certain species. Socrates is male, but Xanthippe is female. Thus, while both propria and inseparable accidents are strongly connected with the essential features of a thing, they are related to different aspects of the essence; propria are related to the formal aspects of something, which are always the same in each individual pertaining to a certain species, while inseparable accidents are related to the material aspects of something, which might differ across the members of a species. In the end, however, proper and inseparable accidents are always actual in the subjects to which they pertain, and always pertain to them.

Both propria and inseparable accidents are accidental features of things, while the features from which they are derived are essential. One might wonder why this is the case, for being derived from essential features, propria and inseparable accidents are as necessary as the essential features: whenever the essential features are present, the propria and inseparable accidents derived from them must also be present. Indeed, in the course of nature, propria and inseparable accidents seem always to come together with the essential features from which they are derived. But, as Boethius notices, there is a difference between them. Since propria and inseparable features are derived from essential features, they are distinct from them. Thus, it should be possible to think of them as separable from the essential features. For example, one can understand what a human being is without considering the ability to learn grammar, and one can understand what a dog is without taking into consideration the feature ‘being male’, although Fido will never exist without being male. Thus, like any accident and in contrast to essential features, propria and inseparable accidents are separable from their subjects; but in contrast to common accidents, they seem to be only conceptually separable from their subjects.

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9 It should be noted that the distinction between propria and inseparable accidents relies on the acceptance of hylomorphism. If one gives up the distinction between matter and form, then inseparable accidents pertain in the same way to an essence as the propria do.

10 See the text from Porphyry referred to in note 5.

1.2. The Relation between *Propria* and Inseparable Accidents and the Essential: Three Approaches

The problem of how the accidental and the essential relate to each other is at the centre of medieval philosophers’ concern with the structure of reality. Both accidental and essential features account for how things are structured and how things play a role in their causal relations with each other. For example, a thing’s acquisition of simple accidents is usually the result of causal interactions with another thing: a wall becomes blue because a painter paints it; a pot is heated when a fire heats it etc. However, the acquisition by a thing of its *propria* and inseparable accidents is more puzzling, since these accidents do not seem to be acquired through the usual kind of causal interactions. For instance, Socrates is born with the ability to learn grammar, since he is born as a rational being and this ability to learn grammar derives from his rationality. But, what does it mean for *propria* and inseparable accidents to be derived from the essential features of a thing? In the last decades of the thirteenth century, medieval philosophers debate the problem of how to capture in metaphysical terms the intuitive idea that a thing’s *propria* and inseparable accidents are derived from or explained by that thing’s essential features. Let us call this problem the *derivation problem*. The debate about this problem is marked by the fact that many thirteenth century philosophers frame the relation between a thing’s *propria* and inseparable accidents and its essential features in causal terms. More exactly, they maintain that the essential features of a thing, that is, its substance, play the role of a cause (in one or several of the four possible ways represented by the Aristotelian four causes) of these *propria* and inseparable accidents.

My aim in this section is to explain why medieval philosophers in the thirteenth century address the derivation problem in causal terms. When one says that *propria* and inseparable accidents are derived from essential features, one means that these accidents depend in a certain way on these features. There are three possible ways to capture this dependence: by appeal to the notion of existential dependence (this is what I will call the ontological approach); by appeal to the notion of logical dependence (the logical approach); and by appeal to the notion of causal dependence (the causal approach, which is the approach favoured by thirteenth century philosophers). I will discuss each approach in part to show why, for these medieval philosophers, the causal one makes the most sense.
1.2.1. The Ontological Approach

According to the ontological approach, an entity ontologically depends on another entity just in case the former depends on the latter for its existence. Understanding ontological dependence in terms of existence is a common practice in contemporary philosophy and might appear to suit the way in which medieval philosophers think that propria and inseparable accidents depend on essential properties. The reason why one might think that the dependence of propria and inseparable accidents can be understood as existential dependence is that, in Aristotelian metaphysics, accidental features in general depend for their existence on essential features.

In what sense do accidental features depend for their existence on essential ones? ‘Able to learn grammar’ or ‘tanned’ are, at the logical level, predicates of Socrates. The logical relation of being predicated of something is understood at the ontological level as a relation of inherence: Socrates is tanned because tanned, a certain quality, inheres in him, and he can learn grammar because a certain ability, again a quality, inheres in him. Because it is in the nature of accidents to inhere in something, they do not enjoy independent existence: they depend for their existence on that in which they inhere.12 There is no tan floating around Socrates; tan exists only as Socrates’s tan or Plato’s tan. On the other hand, the beings in which accidents inhere are self-subsisting, that is, they do not exist in another as accidents do, and so have independent existence. These self-subsisting beings are individual entities or what Aristotle calls primary substances such as Socrates the philosopher, Felix the cat, and Fido the dog. Primary substances such as Socrates, Felix and Fido are what they are in virtue of their own essential features. This can be seen once we analyze how these individuals behave during change. Fido ceases to exist when he loses his essential features, his canine nature, and he persists as long as he possesses this canine nature. Thus, since primary substances are self-subsisting, the essential features that constitute them are also self-subsisting. Given these considerations, when one says that the accidental features depend for their existence on essential features, one is claiming that while substances are self-subsisting, accidents depend on substances or essential features for their existence.

But is the relation of existential dependence sufficient to explain how propria and inseparable accidents are related to the substances in which they inhere? The existential dependence of propria and inseparable accidents on these substances can be captured in the following way:

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12 There is an exception to this rule: the case of the accidents that are miraculously maintained in existence by God. In the next section, I will discuss more how this exception affects medieval thinking about the relation between propria and essential properties.
For *propria* and inseparable accidents to ontologically depend on some essential features (or on a substance), these essential features must be a necessary condition for the existence of the *propria* and inseparable accidents.

For example, a *proprium* such as the ability to learn grammar depends ontologically on a human being’s essential feature of being rational because the ability to learn grammar necessarily requires for its existence the feature of being rational. Here existential dependence just means being a necessary condition for the existence of something else. While this understanding of existential dependence is correct when applied to simple accidents, it cannot capture what is peculiar about *propria* and inseparable accidents. Medieval philosophers usually agree that, like simple accidents, *propria* and inseparable accidents must be in or inhere in a substance, but they would insist that in contrast to simple accidents, *propria* and inseparable accidents are derived from the essential features of a thing. Thus, if a *proprium* or an inseparable accident merely requires an essential feature for its existence, then a *proprium* or an inseparable accident is in no way different from a simple accident. Indeed, the existence of any simple accident requires the existence of a substance (or some essential features), and simple accidents are not derived from that substance in the way the *propria* and inseparable accidents are supposed to be. Thus, understanding existential dependence in terms of being a necessary condition for the existence of an accident is not sufficient for explaining why, in contrast to simple accidents, *propria* and inseparable accidents are said to be derived from their substances.

Before discussing another way in which ontological dependence can be understood, let us focus for a moment on the expression ‘necessary condition’. A substance is said to be a necessary condition for the existence of an accident; this expression can have two meanings, depending on how medieval philosophers think about the separability of *propria* from a substance. Most medieval philosophers think that some accidents can exist separately from substances. In the normal course of nature, accidents cannot exist separately from their substances, but God has the power to break the course of nature by making some accidents exist without a substance. This is what happens in the Eucharist, when the substance of bread is destroyed by God but its accidents of colour, taste, texture, etc., are preserved by divine power. However, views are divided on whether God can make *propria*
exist separately from the essential features. Some medieval philosophers, among whom Thomas Aquinas can be counted, hold that not even God can make *propria* exist apart from substances. Other scholastic philosophers such as Francisco Suárez, maintain that since *propria* are accidents and since God can make accidents exist without their substances in which they inhere, then He can also make *propria* and inseparable accidents exist without their substances. According to these philosophers, while God destroys the substance of the bread in the Eucharist, He preserves the *proprium* of the bread, that is, its nutritive power. Because these philosophers believe that God can separate *propria* from their essential features of a thing, they will interpret ‘necessary condition’ to refer to what is necessary only according to the course of nature.

Ontological dependence can be framed not just as one thing’s existence requiring the existence of another thing, but as the nature or essence of a thing requiring the existence of another thing. For example, according to medieval theology, part of what it means to be a creature is to exist only if God exists. This sense of dependence, which appeals to both essence and existence seems to have more success in capturing the idea that *propria* and inseparable accidents are derived from essential features. According to this understanding of ontological dependence, it is not just that *propria* and inseparable accidents require the existence of essential features or substances, but that they *essentially* require their existence. The criterion for being a *proprium* or an inseparable accident can thus be formulated as follows:
For *propria* and inseparable accidents to depend ontologically on essential features or on a substance, these accidental features need to be essentially such that they exist only if the essential properties do.\(^{16}\)

According to this understanding of ontological dependence, a *proprium* such as ‘able to grow roots’ depends ontologically on the essential features of a plant, because the feature of being able to grow roots is essentially such that if a thing has it, then that thing also has a vegetable nature. However, concerning this understanding, two remarks are in order.

First, this understanding of ontological dependence commits one to the view that *propria* and inseparable accidents have essences. This is not an unusual claim, for medieval philosophers generally agree that accidents, including *propria* and inseparable ones, have a kind of essence; what they do not agree with is the idea that substances are of the essence of accidents, that is, that substances enter into the definition of an accident.\(^ {17}\) Thus, when understanding ontological dependence in this second way, we should avoid thinking that accidents essentially requiring substances for their existence means that substances are of the essence of accidents. Second, this understanding of ontological dependence corresponds to a principle that medieval philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas presumably have in mind when they claim that *propria* cannot be separated from their substance: according to this principle, “it pertains to the essence of a proper passion not to be separable” from its substance.\(^ {18}\) A ‘not being separable’ from \(B\) can be interpreted as ‘If \(A\) exists, then \(B\) exists’.\(^ {19}\) What is important

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17 See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *In Duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Expositio* VII, 1, iv in Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, ed. M.R. Cathala and R. M. Spiazzi, 2nd ed. (Turin: Marietti, 1971), 1352., where he says: “Accidens autem dependet a subiecto, licet subiectum non sit de essentia accidentis, sicut creatura dependet a creatore et tamen creator non est de essentia creaturae, ita quod oporteat exteriorem essentiam in eius definitione ponere. Accidens vero non habent esse nisi per hoc quod insunt subiecto, et ideo eorum quidditas est dependens a subiecto, et propter hoc oportet quod subiectum in accidentis definitione ponatur.” Aquinas agrees that a substance cannot be of the essence of an accident, nevertheless, it can be part of the definition of the accident. However, the definition of an accident is not an essential definition, but a special kind of definition—*definitio data per additamentum*.

18 See the text mentioned in note 14.

19 One can interpret ‘not being separable’ in a stronger way: \(A\) ‘not being separable’ from \(B\) means ‘\(A\) exists if and only if \(B\) exists’. Suárez’s principle will then read: “It is in the nature of *propria* to exist if and only if substances exist.” This gives a stronger criterion of ontological dependence for *propria*. Thus, we can reformulate the understanding of ontological dependence in the following way: for *propria* to depend ontologically on the essential properties or a substance, they need
about this principle is that it appeals to the idea that propria are essentially such that they are not separable from a substance. From this, it follows that if propria exist, then the substance that has them exists.

Medieval philosophers can challenge this second understanding of ontological dependence in two ways. Philosophers (such as Suárez) who take propria to be separable from substances must reject it; indeed, they argue that propria have their own being and essence, distinct from the essence and being of substances. But entities with different essences and different being are really distinct: since propria and substances are really distinct entities, they can be separated. This also means that the existence of an underlying substance—a substratum—is not essential for propria.20

On the other hand, medieval philosophers who think that propria are not separable from substances can still insist that the second understanding of ontological dependence does not offer a complete account of the relation between propria and essential properties. This is because this new understanding, although it does tell us how propria depend on a thing’s essential properties, does not tell us anything about how the propria came to exist. Why is the bringing about of the propria a problem that needs to be addressed? Many medieval philosophers think that propria, like any accident, have a certain kind of being and essence, different from the being and essence of the substances in which they inhere.21 Thus, it makes sense for them to ask from where an accident or proprium acquires its

20 See Francisco Suárez, CDA* 2.1. 7, 574. “Haec vero opinio ex eo probatur quia nulla est implicatio contradictionis in ea re: sunt enim animae, eiusque potentiae entitates distinctae, neque una esentialiter pendet ab altera. Probatio autem desumpta ab Eucharistia ostendit quidem hoc esse consonum illi mysterio, non tamen est cum dicatur de fide. Namque S. Thomas, 3 p. question. 75, articulo 6 ad ultimum, ait operationes consequentes substantiam panis convenire accidentibus miraculose, ac si manerent ibi potentiae ad illas.” On Suárez’s own position see CDA* 2.1. 8: 574: “Ad argumentum ergo alterius opinionis respondetur, ex sola distinctione reali non colligi separabilitatem, si adsit essensialiter dependientia, quals inter relationem et terminum intercedit. Ad confirmationem dicitur cum divo Thoma, 1, 2 supra, separata potentia, verbi gratia, intellectu, adhuc animam fore intellectivam non formaliter sed radicaliter: atque haec est differentia inter passiones et accidentia communia naturaliter inseparabilia, quod passiones radicentur in essentia, non vero accidentia, et ideo quantum est ex vi esse propria.

21 Here I want to make two points. First, there is some controversy over the ontological status of propria in the fourth sense. (See the discussion of Nicholas of Amsterdom’s position later in this chapter). Second, there is some controversy concerning Aquinas’s view on the being and essence of all accidents. I have identified at least three different positions in the literature: (1) accidents are only states of substance, not things over and above the substance (Cross, The Metaphysics of the Incarnation, 40–43); (2) accidents have an accidental being which is really distinct from the substantial being of its subject (John F. Wippel, The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 253–65); (3) accidents have an accidental being “which is really distinct from their essence and from the being and essence of their substances.” (Barry F. Brown, Accidental Being: A Study in the Metaphysics of
being and essence. In my view, the question of how not only propria but any accident is brought about—what I call the origin problem—is an important issue in medieval metaphysics. In fact, it is one of the main motivations at the centre of the late thirteenth century debate over the relation between a substance and its propria.

The origin problem raises questions for any attempt to frame the derivation problem in terms of existential or essential dependence, for at least the kinds of dependence discussed up to this moment do not seem to be suitable to answer this problem. Prima facie, the derivation problem and the origin problem seem to be distinct issues. Thus, one can argue that this second understanding of ontological dependence can be an account of the derivation problem, but the origin problem should be solved in a different way. Nevertheless, thinking about the origin problem points out another problematic aspect of this second understanding. When we ask from where propria (and inseparable accidents) receive their being and their essence, we are inquiring about the explanatory role of essential properties. While the second understanding of ontological dependence says that the propria and inseparable accidents are essentially such that they require for their existence the existence of the essential properties, it does not explain why they require the existence of these essential properties. Consider the following example: it is true that the capacity to grow roots requires the existence of a plant. But why do we take this claim to be true? One possible answer is that we take it to be true because we think that the capacity to grow roots is somehow explained by the essential properties of a plant, by what a plant is, and not just by the existence of a plant. But to capture the explanatory role of essential properties, we should understand ontological dependence in another way.

According to a third way of understanding ontological dependence, a thing B depends for both its existence and what it is on a thing A’s existence and on at least some features of what A is. An intuitive example of this case would be how an offspring depends on its parents: both the nature and the existence of the offspring is explained by the nature and the existence of its parents. In relation to propria and inseparable accidents, this idea can be expressed in the following way:

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St. Thomas Aquinas (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1985), 281 and passim.). Note that given Cross’s views about the ontological status of accidents in Aquinas, his position in [Text 2] makes sense: since accidents do not have any being other than the being of their substance, there is no point in inquiring about the causal relevance of the substance with respect to its accidents.

For *propria* and inseparable accidents to depend ontologically on some essential features (or a substance), they must be essentially such that they exist in virtue of the existence of the essential properties.\(^\text{23}\)

For example, being hot is a *proprium* of fire. This means that being hot is essentially such that it exists as a *proprium* of fire in virtue of the existence of a fire and the nature of fire.

The expression ‘in virtue of’ carries the weight of this third understanding of ontological dependence for it indicates that the existence and essence of the *propria* and inseparable accidents is explained by the existence and nature of the essential features. The essential features not only are required for something to exist, as the second understanding claims, but they also play an explanatory role, for it is in virtue of their existence that the *propria* and inseparable accidents exist and are what they are. Moreover, the expression ‘in virtue of’ also captures the idea of essential features being basic or fundamental and the *propria* and inseparable accidents being derived from them. Thus, the expression ‘in virtue of’ points out that there is an order of explanation between the essential features and the *propria*: the essential features are fundamental and basic, while *propria* are derivative. But even this new understanding of ontological dependence remains uncommitted about the nature of the relation between the *propria* and substances, for it claims only that one entity is explained by reference to the other.\(^\text{24}\) Medieval philosophers, on the other hand, think that the relation between the *propria*, inseparable accidents and their bearer can be rendered clearer if it is explained as a causal relation. But before discussing their approach, let me tackle another approach to the derivation problem.

### 1.2.2. The Logical Approach

The logical approach aims to explain the relation of *propria* and inseparable accidents to essential features by appeal to the notion of logical consequence. This approach is suggested by the recent work of Kit Fine on the notion of essence. Fine distinguishes between two senses of essence: constitutive essence and consequential essence. He understands the essence of something as being the “class of

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\(^\text{23}\) This account was formulated based on Correia, “Ontological Dependence,” 1020–22.

\(^\text{24}\) This third form of dependence is the dependence that is known in contemporary philosophy as the grounding relation. About the limitations of this relation for explaining metaphysical dependence see Jessica Wilson, “No Work for a Theory of Grounding,” *Inquiry* 57, no. 5–6 (2014): 535–579.
propositions that are true in virtue of what the object is.”25 This means that the essence of Socrates can be understood as a collection of propositions that are true in virtue of what Socrates is. However, the collection of propositions that are true in virtue of what Socrates is contains propositions about both basic and derived essential features of Socrates. The propositions referring to these basic features will be part of the constitutive essence of Socrates. For example, being a man is part of the constitutive essence of Socrates. The derived propositions obtained through logical consequence from the propositions pertaining to the constitutive essence of an object constitute its consequential essence.26

By ‘logical consequence’, Fine understands a logical implication.27 As an example of a proposition pertaining to the consequential essence, he mentions the proposition attributing the feature ‘being a man or a mountain’ to Socrates.28

Some contemporary philosophers have inquired whether this distinction between the two types of essences might be applied to the Aristotelian distinction between propria and substances, so that essential features are contained in the constitutive essence.29 The reason why this distinction seems at first sight to map onto the Aristotelian one lies in the idea that propria are derived from the more basic essential properties. The question is whether $A$ being derived from $B$ can be rendered as

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27 See Fine, “Senses of Essence,” 56–57. One of the problems with which Fine deals extensively is how to ensure that only the propositions that are relevant for the essence of an object are in the consequential essence. The unwelcome alternative is that any logical truth, since is a logical consequence of any proposition whatsoever, will be part of the consequential essence. For example, the proposition “$A$ is identical with $A$” is such a logical truth and it will be inferred from any proposition that pertains to the constitutive essence of Socrates. Fine proposes that such truths since they are logical consequences of any propositions, not just the ones that are contained in the essence of Socrates, can be ‘generalized out’, that is, can be left out from the consequential essence of Socrates. This procedure ensure that in the consequential essence of Socrates are contained only propositions that are logical consequences of his constitutive essence and of no other constitutive essence. See ibid., 59–60; Fine, “Ontological Dependence,” 277–78. It is unclear to me the extent to which this is a problem in the medieval context. The contemporary problem seems to be partially caused by the idea of logical implication used in modern logic, which does not appear in the works of most of the medieval authors I discuss in this chapter.


A being a logical consequence of B. If we accept that it can be rendered in this way, then we will have the following view about the propria’s relation to essential properties:

Propositions about propria follow through logical consequence from propositions pertaining to the constitutive essence of an object.

Kathrin Koslicki argues persuasively that understanding the relation between the propria and essential features in terms of logical consequence is not possible in the Aristotelian context because propositions about the propria “do not logically follow solely from propositions that belong to an object’s constitutive essence.”\(^{30}\) The point Koslicki is making can be explained by an example. Consider the proprium ‘being able to learn grammar’. In the beginning of this chapter, I pointed out that this proprium is derived from or explained by appeal to the essential feature of ‘being capable of laughing’ because to be able to learn grammar one must be rational. However, being able to learn grammar cannot be logically deduced from being rational, because being able to understand grammatical rules is not a feature that is contained in the concept of rationality. Thus, there is no reference to grammar in the concept of rationality.\(^{31}\) Since propositions about propria cannot be logically inferred from essential properties, any analysis of this relation that appeals to the notion of logical consequence is not adequate.

What do medieval logicians say about the derivation of propria from essential features? For example, Peter of Spain mentions it as a case of something following from something else, in the context of the discussion about the nature of inferences that contain the word ‘if’ (si) such as “If it is fire, it is warm.” But to see what he says about this case, we need first to understand more the nature of these inferences or consequences.\(^{32}\)

One might find it surprising that sentences containing ‘if’ are treated as inferences and not as implications or conditionals. Conditionals or implications are statements and therefore one can ask about their truth value: given the truth value of their consequent and antecedent, one can ask about the truth value of the entire statement. Concerning inferences, one can ask in virtue of what the

\(^{30}\) See Koslicki, “Essence, Necessity, and Explanation,” 194.

\(^{31}\) At the end of her analysis of how propria are related to essential properties, Koslicki proposes that the relation between propria and Fine’s constitutive essence must be understood by appeal to Aristotelian demonstrations and explanations that are just “the linguistic correlates of essences and causes.” Ibid., 199.

inferences or the consequences hold, whether they are valid or not, and whether we have grounds for drawing them. Peter of Spain is indeed interested in the relation holding between the antecedent and consequent. He argues that this relation is a relation of causality “either in antecedence or through antecedence.” He starts from a point that Priscian makes, namely that the word ‘if’ signifies a certain order between things. Although this might suggest that consequences refer only to causal relations between things, Peter explains that in the context of the discussion about consequences, the term ‘cause’ does not refer to something that is the cause for the existence of something else (for example, two essential parts are the cause for the existence of the whole). Rather ‘cause’ is taken in a larger sense, namely for anything from which something follows or in virtue of which something is a consequent.

However, probably concerned that such an understanding of ‘cause’ will not be able to explain Priscian’s point that ‘if’ signifies an ordering between things, Peter of Spain further explains what it means for something to follow from something else or for something to be a cause for something being a consequent. He distinguishes five reasons in virtue of which the consequent can be said to follow from the antecedent: (1) because of an essential relation of predication (for example, how from a species, the genus and specific difference follow); (2) because of being an integral part of a whole (for example, the parts of an extended whole such as a house or a machine); (3) because of being an essential part of a whole (for example, the soul and body follow from being a human being); (4)


35 See Peter of Spain, Syncategoremata, tract. V, 4: 198: “Et Priscianus exponit sic: vim significant ille coniunctiones que significant res alios simul esse (ut ‘pius et fortis fuit Eneas’); ordinem significant coniunctiones quando monstrant consequentiam aliquarum rerum (ut ‘si ambulat, movetur’). Sed hec dictio ‘si’ et consimiles significant ordinem.”

36 Ibid.: “Causa” dicitur dupliciter. Quia quedam est causa que est causa rei quoad esse, et hoc est causa essendi, ut corpus et anima sunt causa hominis quoad esse et sol lucens super terram est causa diei quoad esse. Alia autem est causa que est causa consequendi. Et sic in qualibet conditionali antecedens est causa consequentis, non essendi, sed consequendi.”
because of being the underlying subjects of accidents or the proper features of a subject (for example, how the \textit{propria} follow from the intrinsic principles of a subject); or finally (5) because of being relative items (such as master and slave, student and teacher, etc.). These reasons, also called topical places or relationships (\textit{habitudines}), are that in virtue of which something is concluded from the antecedent. Their role is to explain why a certain ‘if’ sentence is in fact an inference, that is, why it can produce faith concerning something that was doubtful before.

Does a consequence such as “if this is a human being, this is capable of laughing” hold because of a logical implication between the antecedent and the consequent? No: as Peter of Spain explains, consequences hold because of a topical place or relationship. What does this mean for the derivation of \textit{propria} from essential features? We find an answer to this question in another thirteenth century author, Boethius of Dacia. Boethius claims that a topical place is not the cause for why a consequence holds, but a sign of it. His point is that if a topical place were a cause, then the consequence would in fact be a syllogism, an argument in which the conclusion follows necessarily in virtue of the relation between the terms and in which science and knowledge is produced. However, like Peter of Spain, Boethius emphasizes that consequences are arguments that produce faith, that is, probable conclusions, which there are good reasons to believe. The topical places are signs of how the things are, that is, they allow the logician to say that it is necessary that if something is a fire, it is hot: this conditional relies on the relationship between \textit{propria} and its essential features (reason 4). But Boethius, considering precisely how the proper accidents follow from the intrinsic features of something, immediately adds that “a plain logician cannot give the cause for” why they follow from the intrinsic

\begin{itemize}
\item[Ibid., tract. V, 7: 200.]
\item[Ibid., tract. V, 31: 232-233 (trans. Spruyt): “omne argumentum sit ratio inferendi secundum aliquam vel aliquas habitudines (quia argumentum est ratio rei dubie faciens fidem et fides non potest fieri de re dubia nisi per habituidinem vel habitudines aliquas).”]
\item[See Boethius of Dacia, \textit{Quaestiones Super Librum Topicorum}, I, q. 5: 22: “dialecticus enim nihil considerat ut necessarium et nihil considerat per causas. In quantum tamen talis habitudo localis speciei ad genus et generis ad speciem est signum huius consequentiae, non causa, consideratur a dialectico propter communem intentionem in qua fundatur huiusmodi habitudo localis, et sic etiam est argumentum dialecticum. Communis autem intentio speciei et generis et habitudo localis non sunt causa huius consequentiae, quod patere potest ex hoc quod si esset possibile has res esse, scilicet hominem et animal, sine hoc quod in eis esset habitudo speciei ad genus et generis ad speciem, adhuc ista consequentia esset bona.” By ‘\textit{habitudo localis}’, Boethius means topical places or relationships.]
\end{itemize}
features, for “he cannot consider the nature of things.” A logician can only say that the *propria* follow from the essential features, but not why this happens. To say why is to give an explanation for the derivation of *propria*, which is the job of the metaphysician.\(^{41}\) Thus, it seems that according to Boethius, and probably also Peter of Spain, the job of the metaphysician is to discover what *propria* follows from which essential features and why this happens. Once this piece of knowledge is acquired, the logician can assess consequences about the relevant *propria* and essential features and explain that they hold in virtue of a specific topical place.\(^{42}\)

### 1.2.3. The Causal Approach

For medieval philosophers, neither logical nor ontological dependence can give a satisfactory answer to the question concerning the nature of the relation between *propria*, inseparable accidents, and their substances. The logical approach cannot explain in what sense the *propria* are derived from their substances, because their derivation is not a matter of logical implication. The ontological-dependence approach explains how *propria* and inseparable accidents depend for their existence and essence on the existence and essences of substances, but it cannot account for the causal origin of the *propria* and inseparable accidents. Even the third understanding of existential dependence, the most promising version of the ontological-dependence approach, leaves unexplained the causal origin of these accidents. Recall that accounting for the causal origin of the *propria* and inseparable accidents should be considered a central issue in medieval metaphysics, since many medieval philosophers are committed to the view that accidents have a kind of essence and being that is different from that of a substance. Given that accidents have such an essence and being, one needs to provide an account of how these accidents came about. To solve this problem, some medieval philosophers envisage the relation between a substance and its proper and inseparable accidents in causal terms. But how does this understanding the relation between proper accidents, inseparable accidents, and the substance also explain the derivation problem?

\(^{41}\) Ibid., V, q. 5: 260-61: “Proprium enim consequitur propria principia subiecti, quae quia semper in subiecto manent, ideo et ipsum proprium non mutatur. Et causam hanc reddere non potest purus logicus; ipse enim naturas rerum et tales causas in rebus considerare non potest. In multis enim, ubi logicus dicit quia, debet philosophus dicere propter quid.”

\(^{42}\) The position of Boethius of Dacia and Peter of Spain is thus closer to the one proposed by Kathrin Koslicki. See note 31 above.
To get an overview of some of the causal alternatives that a medieval philosopher might pursue in explaining the causal relation of *propria* and inseparable accidents to their substances and also to get an overview of some of the philosophical problems that are lurking in the back of these alternatives, I will discuss the view of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas is not only among the first medieval philosophers to grapple with the derivation problem, but he also proposes an influential account, albeit a flawed one, as I will show.

Aquinas addresses the derivation and origin problem in a question that becomes the *locus classicus* for this issue: whether the powers of the soul flow from the soul’s essence. Aquinas understands the powers of the soul, such as the intellect or the will, as proper accidents of the soul; this means that beings that have rational souls have these powers necessarily. But the powers are nevertheless distinct from the soul, probably because powers are related to acts of understanding and willing that are outside the essence of the soul—it is contingent whether a certain rational being ever has such acts. 43

More precisely, Aquinas addresses the question of what it means for the powers of the soul to ‘flow from the essence of the soul’, an issue that enters the medieval discussion from Michael of Ephesus’s commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics*. 44 The flowing of these powers from the essence of the

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43 I will discuss Aquinas’s view about powers (of the soul) in more detail in chapter 4. The relevant text for this discussion is *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 77, art. 1.


On the problem of what it means to say that the powers flow from the soul and how this flowing is different from simple causality see Thérèse Bonin, “The Emanative Psychology of Albertus Magnus,” *Topoi* 19, no. 1 (2000): 45–57. Bonin is not interested in what kind of cause the soul is with respect to its powers, but in what emanation is supposed to add to simple causation. She argues that the vocabulary of emanation emphasizes two aspects: the order in which the powers proceeds from the soul and the unity the soul has with its powers. For other works that deal with the problem of the flowing of the powers from the soul see Pius Künzle, *Das Verhältnis der Seele zu ihren Potenzen: Problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen von Augustin bis und mit Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag Freiburger Schweiz, 1956), 171–218; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 275–94; Adam Wood, “The Faculties of the Soul and Some Medieval Mind-Body Problems,” *The Thomist* 75, no. 4 (2011): 585–636; Sander de Boer, *The Science of the Soul: The Commentary Tradition on Aristotle's De anima*, c. 1260-c. 1360 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), 227–52; Dominik...
soul seems to be a causal relation, but it is difficult to establish the exact nature of this causality. In his *Summa Theologicae* I, q.77, art. 6, Aquinas says:

> [Text 4] Hence the subject receives the accidental form in so far as it is potential to it, but produces (*est productivum*) it in so far as it is actual. This I say of the proper and *per se* accident. When an accident is predicated of it on purely extrinsic grounds it is merely the recipient; an outside agent produces such an incidental feature. [...] A subject of an accident proper to it is at once its final cause, and in a certain manner an active cause (*quodammodo activa*) and even its material cause, in that it receives the accident. This makes it acceptable to say that the essence of the soul is the cause of all its powers, as what they are there for the sake of, as their active source (*principium activum*), and of some as their recipient.\(^4^5\)

By proper and *per se* accidents, Aquinas means proper and inseparable accidents; by extraneous accidents, he means simple accidents. He mentions three alternatives according to which the causality between the *propria* and their substance can be framed: a substance can be a material, final or active cause of its *propria*. If we think that what he means by an active cause is an efficient cause, then the only term that Aquinas does not use is ‘formal cause’.

Let us start with why the relation between a thing and its proper and inseparable accidents cannot be explained in terms of formal causes. According to Aristotle’s *Physics* II.3, 194b27–39, a formal cause is “the form or the archetype, i.e. the definition of the essence and its genera.”\(^4^6\) Commenting on this Aristotelian text, Aquinas says that the form or the archetype is the formal cause insofar it is “the quidditative nature of the thing, for this is that through which we know of each thing ‘what it is’.”\(^4^7\) This means that the formal cause of a thing indicates its essential features and any explanation by appeal to formal causality is an essential explanation. Were Aquinas to allow for substances to be the formal causes of their *propria*, then this would amount to saying that substances constitute the essence of *propria*. But Aquinas denies that substances are contained in the essence of

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accidental features, although he allows for them to be mentioned in the *propria*’s definitions; keep in mind, however, that a *proprium*, or, for that matter, any kind of accident, does not have a definition properly speaking of its essence. As long as *propria* are ontologically or metaphysically really distinct from substances—a *proprium*, although it follows from the essential features, still remains an accident—a substance can never essentially define an accident because substance and accident are metaphysically two really different kinds of entities. This explains why Aquinas never mentions that the relation between *propria* and their substance involves formal causality.

These considerations did not prevent medieval philosophers from maintaining that a substance is the formal cause of some of its accidents. Some have maintained this view in a qualified way. For example, Giles of Rome, at least in some works, and Thomas of Sutton seem to defend a view that a substance is a quasi-formal cause of some of its accidents. They refer to the motions of heavy and light elements that are formally caused by features of these elements (their heaviness or lightness). Although, strictly speaking, these are cases of self-motion, there is no impediment to applying this view to proper and inseparable accidents too. Others have maintained this view unqualifiedly. For example, James of Viterbo maintains that a substance is the formal cause of some

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48 See the text in note 17.
49 See Giles of Rome, *Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis (= In Phys)*, liber VIII, in Giles of Rome, *Aegidii Romani commentaria in octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis* (Venice: per Andream de Torresanis, 1505), fol. 103ra.: “Nam huismodi motus effective est a generans formaliter autem a forma gravis. Non ergo est inconveniens huismodi motum reducere in ipsam naturam gravis tanquam in principium per se sed non tanquam in principium effectivum, sed magis quasi in principium formale. […] generans hoc modo moveat grave deorsum dando ei formam gravis quia dando ei talem formam dat sibi quod competat ei talis locus et tales motus.” Although the context of the discussion is the motion of elements—and the motion of the elements is not a *proprium*—this text can be interpreted as proposing that the nature of the elements (i.e. their essential properties) are the formal principles of certain of their accidents, including *propria*.
50 Thomas of Sutton seems to defend this view in *Quaestiones Ordinariae*, q. 2. The context of the discussion is the causal role of intelligible species (representational vehicles that are presupposed by some medieval philosophers in explaining acts of thinking). First, Thomas compares the causal role of these species with the causal role of the substance with respect to its proper accidents. He then compares the intelligible species with the nature and the formal cause. The most relevant passage for the view that a substance is a formal cause is the following: “Forma autem non coincidit in idem numero cum potentia activa efficientis, sed solum in idem specie, ut habetur II Physicorum. […] sed species intelligibilis est natura, prout natura diffinitur in II Physicorum sic: ‘Natura est principium et causa motus et quietis eius, in quo est primo et per se, et non per accidens.’ Et similia est de forma gravis respectu motus et quietis gravis, quod est principium quod est natura. Natura autem non coincidit cum potentia activa, […] quia potentia activa est principium mutandi illud in quo est.” See Thomas of Sutton, *Quaestiones ordinariae*, ed. Johannes Schneider (Munich: Bayerische Akademie, C.H. Beck, 1977), 58–59.
51 See also Francisco Suárez, *CDA* 2.3.1: “De causaliitate formali secundo est certum non competere animae respectu potentiarum, quin potius quodammodo ipsae potentiae sunt formae animae, vel animati, in quo subjectantur.”
of its accidents. Like Giles and Thomas of Sutton, he refers to the case of the motion of elements. More recently, Joseph Owens in An Elementary Christian Metaphysics explains the causality between the powers of the soul and the soul as being formal:

[Text 5] As accidents, of course, the powers inhere directly in the substance. They are caused in it efficiently by the producer of the substance. They are required by the thing's essence, and in this way flow from the essence in sequence of formal causality.

Owens’ passage suggests that the explanation in terms of formal causation decouples the derivation problem from the origin of the propria problem. It also solves the latter problem by appeal to another substance than the bearer of the propria: what generates a substance is what also accounts for the bringing about of the propria.

Let us return to the causal alternatives that Aquinas mentions in [Text 4] and start with the view that a substance is the material cause of its proper and inseparable accidents. According to Aristotle's Physics II.3, 194b24–26, a material cause is “that out of which” something comes to be, and “that which persists” during a change. For example, bronze is not only the material from which the statue is made, but also the material that persists during the process through which a statue is made. Similarly, a substance is what persists during the accidental change (the tree in front of the library that persists although each year it loses its foliage). A material cause is also that which receives something, as matter receives the form or the bronze receives the shape of the statue. Similarly, a substance is also the material cause of all its accidents because it is the substratum in which all accidents inhere or are received—in the normal course of nature, any accident needs to inhere in a substance, while the substance plays for it the role of substratum or receiving cause.

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52 See James of Viterbo, Quodl. I, q. 7 in James of Viterbo, Disputationes de Quo libet, ed. E. Ypma, vol. I (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag, 1968): 96.572-79. On James's view about the role of the substance in causing these accidents see Antoine Côté, “Simplicius and James of Viterbo on Propensities,” Vivarium 47, no. 1 (2009): 24–53. I disagree with Côté on the similarities that he sees between Henry of Ghent and James of Viterbo on the issue of the causation of acts of will and of the motion of elements. Côté says that James's solution to the problem of the self-motion of the will “is similar in many ways to what one finds in other authors belonging to the ‘voluntarist’ school in the thirteenth century. For instance, by granting formal causality to the soul, James is following in the footsteps of Henry of Ghent.” Ibid., 41. As we will see, however, Henry thinks that the soul is the efficient cause of its acts of will for he thinks that a substance is the efficient cause of its proper and inseparable accidents. On the other hand, James clearly emphasizes that the causation of volitional acts is formal.

53 See Joseph Owens, An Elementary Christian Metaphysics (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing House, 1963), 176. Owens might have thought that this is Aquinas’s view, but as we see in [Text 4], Aquinas does not understand the causality of the powers of the soul in terms of formal causality.
To solve both the origin problem and the derivation problem, the substance needs to play more than the role of a material cause for its *propria* and inseparable accidents. Indeed, a substance is a material cause for all its accidents since all its accidents inhere in it, but *propria* and inseparable accidents are closer to the substance in which they inhere because they follow from or are derived from the essential features of this substance. One might think that the easy way to capture this close relationship is to say that the essential features play the role of the efficient cause of the proper and inseparable accidents, that is the substance itself brings them about. But this is problematic for were this to happen, such a substance would be a self-mover or self-changer. In the end, the alternative in terms of material cause suffers from a serious drawback: by itself it solves neither the derivation problem nor the origin problem, and it also seems not to be compatible with the obvious solution to both these problems, namely, the view that a substance is the efficient cause of its proper and inseparable accidents. However, all medieval philosophers need to uphold that a substance is the material cause of its own accidents (*propria* and inseparable accidents included).

A few medieval philosophers defend the more extreme view that a substance is only the material cause of its *propria* and inseparable accidents. Godfrey of Fontaines is among those few.\(^{54}\) I will not enter into details concerning why he maintains this; suffice it to say that part of Godfrey’s worry is precisely Aristotle’s rejection of self-change. If a substance were a material and efficient cause of its *propria* and inseparable accidents, that substance would be a self-agent.

In [Text 4], Aquinas also maintains that a substance is the final cause of its proper and inseparable accidents. A final cause is, according to Aristotle’s *Physics* II. 3, 194b 33–195b2, the end “or that for the sake of which a thing is done.” This means that the *propria* and inseparable accidents are for the sake of a substance. But what is it for these accidents to be for the sake of a substance? What is it, for example, for the powers of the soul to be for the sake of the soul? Francisco Suárez offers a nice answer to these questions, when he says that: “the powers [of the soul] are arranged for the complete state of the living being, in the same way their operations [are also arranged].”\(^{55}\)

\(^{54}\) See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VIII, q. 2 in Godfrey of Fontaines, *Les Quodlibets huitième-dixième de Godefroid de Fontaines (Texte inédit)*, ed. Jean Hoffmans, Les Philosophes Belges 4 (Louvain: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de l’Université, 1924), 29: “Substantia nullo modo debet dici proprie agens, nec principale nec instrumentale respectu suorum accidentium […] sed verum est quod ad fieri et esse accidentium est substantia in actu necessaria, tamen non secundum genus causae efficientis, sed materialis sicut et ad fieri et ad esse formae substantialis necessaria est materia prima.” The context of the passage is the relation of a substance to its *propria*. Note that in this passage, Godfrey is referring to *all* accidents, *propria* included.

\(^{55}\) See Francisco Suárez, *CDA* 2.3.1: “Quantum ad primum certum est, animam seu animatum esse causam finalem potentiarum. Ordinatur enim potentiae ad compleatum statum viventis, sicut et operationes ipsae.” For Suárez on the
powers of the soul do not have their operations independent of their subject; rather they are the instruments of their subject. My power for intellectual thinking does not think without me; rather I am using it to think. Thus, the powers are for the sake of the soul, because they are used as instruments by the soul. Similarly, *propria* and inseparable accidents are for the sake of a substance because they can be used as its instruments. Unfortunately, neither the derivation problem nor the origin problem is solved by this alternative: it does not solve the derivation problem, for a substance can be the final cause of all its accidents; nor does it solve the origin problem, for a final cause is not an efficient cause and so it does not bring anything about.

The last alternative that Aquinas mentions in [Text 4] is that a substance is the active cause of its proper and inseparable accidents. A substance is an active cause because it is productive of the *propria* and inseparable accidents. This alternative is the most intuitive way to solve the derivation and origin problems. It solves the origin problem, since it shows that what brings about the *propria* and inseparable accidents is the substance that has these accidents; it also solves the derivation problem, since a substance is not productive of all its accidents. Thus, this alternative secures for the *propria* and inseparable accidents a special status. It is with this last alternative that I associate self-agency. In self-agency, a substance brings about in itself (without motion) some of its own features. These features are the proper and inseparable accidents, that is, the accidents that a substance always has. I say that I associate self-agency with this last alternative, because I doubt that Aquinas ultimately defends the self-agency view. Indeed, it is not clear what Aquinas means by a substance being productive of its proper and inseparable accidents. In what follows I will use the discussion of Aquinas’s understanding of ‘productive’ as an occasion to spell out in more details the self-agency view.

The most natural interpretation of the last alternative from [Text 4] is to say that Aquinas defends the view that a substance is the efficient cause of its proper accidents since he maintains that the substance produces them, and a productive cause seems to be an efficient cause. But this interpretation is problematic, for not only is this last alternative formulated in a tentative way—Aquinas says that a substance is an active cause only in a certain way (*quodammodo*)—but also the term ‘efficient cause’ appears neither in [Text 4] nor in other passages in which he addresses the same problem. One might counter the last point by saying that Aquinas probably avoids the term ‘efficient cause’ because it is not clear what Aquinas means by a substance being productive of its proper and inseparable accidents. In what follows I will use the discussion of Aquinas’s understanding of ‘productive’ as an occasion to spell out in more details the self-agency view.

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cause’ because of its connotations. According to Aristotle’s *Physics* II.3, 194b30–33, an efficient cause is “the primary source of the change or rest”; thus, if a substance were the efficient cause of its *propria* and inseparable accidents, the production or the emanation of the powers from the essence of the soul might be considered a kind of change or motion (*motus*). If this production or emanation is a kind of motion, then the substance would move itself by giving itself these powers.\(^{56}\) Aquinas denies that the production or emanation of the powers from the soul is a kind of motion for, like many other medieval philosophers, he denies that self-motion is possible. Indeed, immediately after [Text 4], in defending himself against the objection that his view would allow for self-motion, Aquinas says that the causation of proper accidents is without motion, because their causation is a kind of “natural consequence.”\(^{57}\) In the end, Aquinas does not try to find any equivalent for this kind of causation among the four types of cause.

Despite the absence of the term ‘efficient cause’ from the description of the last alternative, some contemporary scholars argue that Aquinas does not deny that a substance is the efficient cause of its *propria* and inseparable accidents. They interpret him as saying that a substance is the active cause of its *propria* because it “exercises a kind of instrumental efficient causality regarding such proper accidents.”\(^{58}\) By describing the substance as an efficient instrumental cause, they mean (1) that a substance is instrumental for the causation of the proper accidents, and (2) that the substance conserves these accidents in being.

Claim 1 is probably inferred from Aquinas’ comments on Aristotle’s *Physics* VIII. Discussing the motion of elements at *Physics* VIII, 256a1, Aristotle says that the natural agent that generates a substance also causes some of its accidents. Commenting on this passage, Aquinas agrees that an element has the inclination to return to its natural place—this inclination is a *proprium* of the element—

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57 See Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 77, art. 6, ad 3 (Piana: 469b): “Ad tertium dicendum quod emanatio propriorum accidentium a subiecto non est per aliquam transmutationem; sed per aliquam naturalem resulationem, sicut ex uno naturaliter alium resultat, ut ex luce color.”

58 See Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 275; Brown, *Accidental Being: A Study in the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 110. Laura Landen argues that a substance is the efficient cause of its *propria*, but without the substance having an active potency for them. She understands active potency as a potency to act on something else. See Laura L. Landen, “Thomas Aquinas and the Dynamism of Natural Substances” (doctoral dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1985), 164. In my view, Landen’s solution is ad hoc: it is unclear to me what it means to be an efficient cause of φ without having a power for φ.
“from the first generator, which gave it the form upon which the inclination follows.” It is not clear that Aquinas’s ‘first generator’ is a natural agent; it seems more plausible that he is referring here to God, who gave the element its nature. Without saying anything more about the generator, Aquinas concludes that the generator is indeed the essential or per se cause of the element’s inclination. Since the generator is the essential cause of the propria, the substance plays an instrumental role: presumably, it is that through which the accidents are caused.

Claim 2, that is, that a substance conserves its propria in being, is based on how, in some places, Aquinas describes the causal activity of a substance:

[Text 6] Nor is the objection valid that an accident may be eternally conserved in a subject, like shape in the heavens. For a heavenly body cannot exist without such a shape, since shape and all accidents in general follow upon (consequentur) substance as their cause. So a subject is related to its accidents not only as passive potency, but also in a way as an active power; and for this reason some accidents are naturally conserved forever in their subjects.

In [Text 6], being an active cause is related to being a conserving cause. A substance is the active cause of its accidents and so it conserves them in being as the heavenly bodies conserve their own shape. Given these remarks, the term ‘productive’ in [Text 4] can be interpreted as referring to a substance continuously conserving its propria and inseparable accidents.

I agree that since Aquinas does not explicitly use the term ‘efficient cause’, he cannot be said to deny that a substance is the efficient cause of its propria and inseparable accidents, but I contend that claims 1 and 2 taken together are not sufficient to show that Aquinas means that a substance, which is an active or productive cause of its proper and inseparable accidents, is an efficient cause of its accidents. Let us start with claim 1, which tells us that for Aquinas a substance is productive of its propria and inseparable accidents because it is that through which the accidents are caused by something else (that is, by the generator). The question is whether such an instrumental cause is


60 Ibid.: “sic igitur generans est per se movens gravia et levia.”

necessarily an efficient cause. Consider a hose with which a gardener brings about that a garden is watered. Can one say that the hose does something actively so that the garden is watered? No. If a substance is that through which something else brings about the propria and inseparable accidents in the same way a hose is that through which the gardener brings about the watering of the garden, then the substance cannot be said to act or to bring about these accidents; that is, it is not an efficient cause, although it is instrumental to the bringing about of these accidents. But one might insist that a substance is productive of its proper and inseparable accidents; thus, the example of the hose is ill chosen. A better example to capture the causality of a substance might be that of a fire used to heat water. Suppose someone wants to heat water and so kindles a fire to heat the water. The fire is an instrument for the heating of the water (that through which the water is made hot), but in contrast with the hose example, in this case, the fire does something: it heats the water because it has the causal powers to do so. If Aquinas maintained this view about the causal contribution of a substance, I agree that he would be maintaining that a substance acts on itself to produce these accidents, that is, he would be maintaining the self-agency view. But I doubt that he does maintain this view. Recall that in [Text 4] Aquinas claims that a substance is an active cause of its own powers: in his view, they are among the proper accidents of the substance. But taken together, the claim from [Text 4] with the claim that a substance is instrumental for the bringing about of its propria in the same way a fire is instrumental in our second example would amount to saying that a substance can cause its own powers without having any power to do so. Thus, if Aquinas maintains that a substance’s powers are among the accidents that a substance is productive of, he cannot also maintain that a substance acts and brings about something, for it does not yet have the power to act or produce anything. Thus, the first example, namely that of the hose, seems better suited to what Aquinas probably maintains. However, it is unclear how on that model a substance is an efficient cause.

One might argue that claim 2 brings more clarity to the issue because it states that a substance produces its propria and inseparable accidents not because it brings them about, but because it conserves them in being, whereas they are brought about by what generates the substance. Since conserving causes are understood as efficient causes, then Aquinas means that a substance is an efficient cause. The problem with this interpretation is that ‘productive’ cannot mean simply ‘conserving’. If Aquinas understands the productive role of substances as their conserving role alone, then he cannot claim that a substance is productive of only its proper and inseparable accidents. The reason is simple: all accidents, simple accidents as well as propria, are conserved in being by their substances, for none of these accidents is naturally able to exist without a substance. Thus, a substance
would need to be an active cause of all its own accidents. But this is against what Aquinas says in [Text 4].

Although the discussion of what Aquinas might mean by the term ‘productive’ has not brought us very far, it has nevertheless served to highlight two points. The first concerns Henry’s remark from [Text 1] that the view that a substance is the agent cause of its proper accidents seems to have been more acceptable among philosophers than the view positing the possibility of self-motion. Indeed, this brief discussion of Aquinas’s view suggests that when Henry makes this remark in [Text 1], he probably has Aquinas in mind. Aquinas can be interpreted—incorrectly in my view—as maintaining the self-agency view, for he says that substances are productive of or are the active causes of their proper and inseparable accidents. Second, and more importantly, this discussion of Aquinas’s understanding of ‘productive’ brings to the fore the relevance of the issue of causal powers. A self-agent cannot be merely a conserving cause of its proper accidents, but must also be a cause that brings these accidents about. But to bring about its proper and inseparable accidents, a substance needs to have a power for bringing them about. This raises the problem of what the nature of this power is: the power cannot be an accidental feature, because if that were the case, the substance would have to bring it about, but it would not be able to because it would not have the relevant powers.

In my view, the importance of Aquinas’s [Text 4] consists not in offering the ultimate answer to the problem of the relation of proper and inseparable accidents to their bearer, but in drawing attention to the issue that lies behind this discussion. Aquinas proposes that a substance is the active cause of its proper and inseparable accidents because he wants to ensure that these accidents have a special status. Thus, he understands that in addressing the problem of the nature of this relation, one needs to address both the derivation problem and the origin problem: in virtue of what do these accidents enjoy a special connection to their bearer and what brings them about? What we see in the last decades of the thirteenth century is the continuation of the effort to spell out the special relation that the *propria* and inseparable accidents have to their substance. For people who want to defend the view that a substance is active with respect to its proper and inseparable accidents, there are two alternatives: either one follows Aquinas and tries to explain what it means for a substance to produce its proper and inseparable accidents, while not being a self-mover; or one bites the bullet—by accepting that a substance that produces its proper and inseparable accidents is an efficient cause and thus a self-agent—and tries to show how self-agency is possible. There are philosophers who explicitly argue that a substance is the efficient and material cause of its *propria*. Giles of Rome defends in some
works a version of this view,\textsuperscript{62} which comes very close to understanding a substance as an instrumental efficient cause. Henry of Ghent\textsuperscript{63} and John Duns Scotus\textsuperscript{64} defend another version, according to which a substance is the principal efficient cause of its \textit{propria}.

Before ending this subsection, let me briefly note that after the thirteenth century the view about the causal relationship between \textit{propria} and essential features faces a new contender, and it comes to be considered an antiquated way to address the problem of the derivation of the \textit{propria} from essential features. For example, Nicholas of Amsterdam (first half of the fifteenth century) notes:

\begin{quote}
[Text 7] According to the ancient logicians and metaphysicians, \textit{proprium} refers to something distinct from a subject; but proper passions have, nevertheless, an essential order to the subject because they are caused and come from the essential principles of the species.\textsuperscript{65} […] According to the moderns, the \textit{proprium} does not posit a real distinction from the subject.\textsuperscript{66} […] It must be said that according to the modern way, although the \textit{proprium} does not posit a real distinction from the subject, there is nevertheless a rational distinction, and therefore the proper passion does not enter with the subject into essential predication, but [only into] accidental [predication]. The reason for this is that, although \textit{proprium} stands for (importet) the same thing
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{62} In \textit{Quodl. VI}, q. 12, Giles of Rome proposes that a substance is an efficient cause because it is an instrumental cause: “Secundo dictur subiectum coincidere et non coincidere cum causa efficiente quia propric non est illud quod agit sed illud quo agitur.” See Giles of Rome, \textit{Quodl. VI}, q. 12, in Giles of Rome, \textit{B. Aegidii Columnae Quodlibeta}, ed. Peter de Coninck (Leuven: Typis Hieronymi Nempaei, 1646), fol. 395. Of course, the generator is the essential efficient cause of the \textit{propria}. “Forma ergo gravis vel levis non est propric id quod agit motum decorum sive sursum, sed est illud quod talis motus agitur. Generans autem gravia agit motum decorum mediante natura gravium et generans levia causat motum sursum mediante natura leviu quia dando talem naturam dat talem motum.” Ibid.


\textsuperscript{64} In his \textit{Quaestiones in librum Porphyrii Isagoge}, Scotus says that a subject is the efficient cause of its properties: “Ad tertium dicitur quod omne quod est tantum in potentià passiva ad aliquid, est in potentià contradictionis ad illud. Subiectum autem respectu propric non est solum in potentià passiva, sed in potentià effective, quia effective est propric a subiecto.” See Scotus, \textit{Quaestiones in librum Porphyrii Isagoge}, q. 33 in John Duns Scotus, \textit{Quaestiones in librum Porphyrii Isagoge et Quaestiones super Priscianamenta Aristotelis}, ed. Robert R. Andrews, Opera Philosophica 1 (St. Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute, 1999), 210. Although in the later works (such as the \textit{Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis (QSM)} b. 9, q. 14) he does not use the term ‘efficient’, in my interpretation, Scotus does not change his view about this topic. References to the \textit{Opera Philosophica} will be indicated as OPh, volume number and page.


\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 108: “Secundum vero modernos propric non ponit distinctionem realem contra subiectum.”
as the subject, nevertheless it stands for it in an extrinsic way.\textsuperscript{67} [...] From this it follows [...] that the proper passion does not come about from the principles of the subject through a real “coming about,” but only through a logical one, and this because the definite being of the passion depends on the subject.\textsuperscript{68}

In [Text 7], after attributing to the old logicians and metaphysicians (that is, those from the thirteenth century) the view that the \textit{propria} are causally from the essential features, Nicholas mentions the view of the modern philosophers (that is, those of the fourteenth century, mostly associated with John Buridan). According to Nicholas, the modern view claims that a \textit{proprium} is not a different thing from its subject, although it has a different connotation from it. Later in the same text, Nicholas explains that a \textit{proprium} such as ‘capable of laughing’ stands for the same thing as human being stands for, but connotes an essential aptitude of a human being for acts of laughing. Since these acts of laughing are extrinsic to the human being, predicating the \textit{proprium} ‘capable of laughing’ of the species ‘human being’ is accidental, since the \textit{proprium} refers to something that is outside the essence of the human being. Because the \textit{proprium} is not a thing different from its subject, there is no reason to understand the relation between the \textit{propria} and essential features in causal terms.\textsuperscript{69} Indeed, in [Text 7] Nicholas considers this relation a purely conceptual one.

Nicholas also offers us some insight into what motivates the moderns to defend the view that the \textit{proprium} is not really distinct from its subject and thus, not caused by it. These motives are related to the nature of the causality between the essential features, the \textit{propria}, and the nature of powers.\textsuperscript{70} For example, the first argument Nicholas mentions is that the view that the \textit{propria} are caused by the intrinsic principles of the species requires the possibility of self-agency, that is, that the same thing can be both active and passive in the same respect. Other arguments refer to principles that if maintained,

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 109: “Dicendum est in via moderna quod, licet proprium non ponat realem distinctionem contra subiectum, est tamen ibi distinctio rationis, et ideo propria passio non constituit cum subiecto praedicationem essentialem, sed accidentalem. Cuius ratio est quia, licet proprium idem importet cum subiecto, tamen hoc importat sub modo extrinseci.”

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.: “Ex quibus sequitur [...] quod propria passio non egreditur reale egressu a principiis subjecti, sed tantum egreditur egressu logico, hoc modo quia esse definitivum passionis dependet a subiecto.”

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 110: “Respondetur quod propria passio cum suo subjecto non constituit praedicationem essentialem sed accidentalem [...] licet propria passio importet idem cum subiecto, [...] importat tamen hoc sub modo extrinseci quia importat hoc in ordine ad aliquem actum extrinsecum procedentem seu sequentem; verbi gratia, ly ‘risibile’ importat aptitudinem essentiae in ordine ad actum ridendi, sed actus ridendi est extrinsecus speciei. Et ideo haec propositio ‘homo ridet’ est in materia contingenti, quamvis haec propositio ‘homo est risibilis’ sit in materia naturali [...] quod aptus est ad ridendum, hoc autem naturae est homini sicut et equo hinnibile.”

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 108-109.
throw into doubt the possibility of the causal relation between substances, *propria*, and inseparable accidents. One such principle is the view that actions pertain to *supposita*, that is, to self-subsisting individuals: since the essential features at the moment of the alleged causation of the *propria* do not make up a *suppositum*, they cannot cause the *propria*. Another principle is the view that the powers of things are qualities. But then, Nicholas argues, the *propria* cannot be caused by the essential features for this would mean that they are caused before something has the power to do so. In the chapters to follow, we will see that both Henry and Scotus are aware of these arguments and try to solve them. However, we will also see that despite their efforts, the nature of the causal relation between *propria* and essential features remains elusive.

### 1.3. Self-Motion and Self-Agency

The focus of this chapter has been to explain why one would maintain the view that a substance acts on itself by bringing about its proper and inseparable features. I proposed that this puzzling view can be understood as an answer to the question about the kind of causal relation that best describes the relation between a substance and its proper and inseparable accidents. However, I have said little about the relevance of this view for the problem of self-motion. In this section I want to do this.

Let us start from a larger question: how are the accidental and the essential helpful for understanding the problem of self-motion and of self-agency generally? Both in self-motion and self-agency, what is caused in oneself is an accidental feature. This feature can be either what appears to be a simple accident, such as the motion of a stone or an act of the will, or an inseparable or proper accident, such as the heaviness of a stone. To be more precise, what is caused in self-agency is a proper and inseparable accident, while what is caused in self-motion is usually a simple accident. Prima facie, self-agency differs from self-motion because there is no motion in self-agency. Change or motion require time and there is no time at which a substance is without these accidents. Indeed, proper and inseparable accidents are always present in a subject, so, since self-agency is about the causation of accidents that are always present in a subject, these accidents are caused without motion or change. Simple accidents are sometimes present in their subject, sometimes not. When a thing can cause in itself such an accident, that thing is said to move itself.

Since self-motion and self-agency concern the production of different kinds of accidents, they seem to be hardly related to each other; but in fact they are related. A closer look at the nature of the accidents caused through self-motion shows that there are relevant similarities between the two cases. The accidents that are caused in self-motion are of a special kind, one that is closer to necessary
accidents than to simple accidents. These accidents are either the operations of things or activities that are necessary for attaining these operations. These operations are necessary accidents of a thing for an operation is just the activity for which a thing is made. Take the example of the will: acts of volition are the operations of the will for only the will is made to have these kinds of act and the will attains the aim for which it is made when it has an act of volition. Or consider the falling motion of a heavy thing: only heavy things have downward motions and if the downward motion is not an operation of such a thing, it is at least a necessary activity for such a thing to attain its operation, which according to Aristotle consists in resting at the centre of the earth. However, although operations are strongly related to what a thing is, and so similar to propria and inseparable accidents, they also differ from these because usually, if not always, for a thing to acquire them, something different from it plays a certain role. For example, for the will to have acts of volitions, objects to be willed must be cognized by the intellect; for stones to fall, they need to be unimpeded and so a remover of impediments to downward motion must be present.

The observation that self-motion and self-agency are related cases is of special interest for what I am doing in this dissertation. First, it explains the way in which Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus address the problem of self-motion. Indeed, when they tackle the problem of self-motion, both Henry and Scotus first mention the case of how a substance causes its proper and inseparable accidents. Second, it allows for a better way of framing the problem of self-motion. While the definition of motion might be an issue in defending the possibility of self-motion, it does not play any role in defending the possibility of self-agency, where there is no motion. However, in both cases, for

71 I say that heavy things, and not stones, are able to fall for it is true that not only stones can have downward motion. All medieval natural philosophers recognize that a stone falls because of its heaviness, which is a proper accident of the stone. Moreover, according to Aristotelian physics, it seems that only heaviness can cause downward motion: this is why, water and earth (from which stones are made) are the only heavy elements and are also the only elements that fall.

72 See the beginning of Henry of Ghent’s Quodl. X, q. 9 and Quodl. XI, q. 6. In Quodl. X, q. 9, Henry refers to the case of the causation of proper and inseparable accidents as the case in which a substance produces in itself its own coeval accidents (i.e. accidents that it always have). He begins his defence of self-motion by saying that he will show in general how something can act on itself: “ita primo ostendendum est generaliter quod aliquid potest agere in se.” See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 14, n. 23 in John Duns Scotus, Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis, libri V-I-IX, ed. R. Andrews, Girard J. Etzkorn, and Gedeon Gál, Opera Philosophica 4 (St. Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute, 1997), 631. When he comes to the discussion of different cases of acting on oneself, the first one he tackles is that in which a substance causes its proper and inseparable accidents, a case that is also introduced under the description of a substance producing in itself its own coeval accidents (i.e. accidents that it always have). Ibid., 635.
a substance to bring about in itself an accidental feature, it needs to be endowed with powers. Thus, both Henry and Scotus deal with the problem of what ontological status powers have and focus less on issues pertaining to the definition of motion. Moreover, once these authors have shown how a substance causes some of its features in itself, they need only explain how in self-motion an accident is caused at the temporal moment at which it is caused, or, in the case of acts of volition, how an act has the content it has; that is, they need to establish the nature of the causal contribution of the outside thing that enabled the self-mover to exercise its powers.

1.4. Conclusion
This chapter started with a puzzling remark from Henry of Ghent. In discussing the possibility of self-motion, Henry refers to a case that is similar to the case of self-motion and seems to be less problematic for medieval philosophers, namely, the case in which a substance is an agent cause of some of its proper features. I explained in this chapter why this case is not as surprising as it initially appears. I propose that the view positing that a substance is an agent cause should be understood as a solution to two problems in medieval philosophy: what accounts for the derivation of the proper and inseparable accidents from their subject, and what brings about these accidents in their subject. Next, I argued that to view the problem of self-motion through the lens of this case is useful, for it allows us to better see where the problem of the possibility of self-motion lies. Indeed, one of the issues that shows up in the discussion of Aquinas’s suggestion that a substance is an active cause of its proper accidents is that we need to get clear about what causal powers are. But before doing that, let us see why exactly the view positing that a substance is a self-mover is problematic. Thus, the next issue to be discussed is why self-motion (and self-agency) is thought by Aristotle to be impossible.
Chapter 2 Aristotle on Self-Motion

Medieval philosophers inherited the problem of self-motion from Aristotle, who discusses the possibility of a thing being able to move itself in the last two books of his *Physics*. Aristotle accepts that there are cases of apparent self-motion, that is, cases in which something composed of two parts moves itself because one part moves the other; he rejects, however, the view that there are cases of genuine self-motion, that is, cases in which something moves itself as a whole. In this chapter, I will discuss Aristotle’s view about self-motion, the arguments that he brings for his view and how these arguments are received in some ancient and medieval authors. Discussing Aristotle’s view about the possibility of self-motion is important for two reasons. On the one hand, it helps us understand why self-motion is a controversial issue among Aristotelians. On the other hand, it familiarizes us with the conceptual framework in which Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus argue for the possibility of genuine self-motion. Although Henry’s and Scotus’s defence of the possibility of self-motion can be seen as a rejection of Aristotle’s view about genuine self-motion, their arguments remain for the most part within the Aristotelian framework and appeal to the resources that Aristotle’s philosophy offers to them. Thus, concepts that appear in Aristotle’s arguments against genuine self-motion show up in Henry’s and Scotus’s defence of self-motion. In discussing Aristotle’s view, I will focus on some of these concepts.

In the first two sections of this chapter, I discuss two claims that Aristotle makes about self-movers, self-motion and its possibility. These are negative claims that purport to show that genuine self-motion is not possible. In the third section, I will discuss several positive claims that show what kind of self-motion Aristotle thinks is possible.

2.1. No self-mover moves itself *per se* and primarily

*Physics* VII.1, 241b 24\(^1\) starts with the general claim that everything that is moved is moved by something else. In many cases, this seems to be true. Neither chairs nor tables move around unless

\(^1\) There are two Greek versions of Aristotle’s *Physics* VII.1, referred as α and β. (In fact, there are two versions of the first three chapters of *Physics* VII). On the difference between them see W. D. Ross’s *Introduction in Aristotle*, *Aristotle’s Physics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 11–19. and Robert Wardy, *The Chain of Change: A Study of Aristotle’s Physics* VII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). While the modern Greek edition of Aristotle’s *Physics* puts α as the main text, some medieval translations of Aristotle’s *Physics* (the so called *translatio vetus* attributed to James of Venice) are based on β. (See the Preface to Aristotle, *Physica: Translatio vetus*, ed. Fernand Bossier and Jozef Brams, Aristoteles Latinus, 7.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), xciii.) Moreover, Michael Scot’s translation of the *Physics* from the edition of Averroes’s works also seems to follow β. Given the importance of β, I will base my discussion
they are pushed by something else. As Aristotle explains, such things do not move themselves because they do not have a source of motion in themselves. But some things do not lack an internal source of motion. For example, animals seem to be the source or origin of their motion: they start or stop at least some of their motions by themselves. They seem to be genuine self-movers, not moved by anything outside themselves. If animals are indeed genuine self-movers, their existence raises a problem for the claim that everything that is moved is moved by something else.

In Physics VII.1, 241b26-242a15, Aristotle replies to this worry and argues that anything that seems to be a self-mover is moved in fact by something else, namely by a part of it. What seems to be genuine self-motion is in fact only apparent self-motion:²

[Text 1] […] take an object AB that is changed per se and not by one of its parts being changed. First, suppose that AB is changed by itself on the grounds that is changed as a whole. […] Again, something changed by itself will never cease from changing as a consequence of another thing’s having stopped changing. Accordingly, it is necessary, if anything ceases from changing as a consequence of another thing’s having stopped, that it is changed by something other than itself. Once this becomes evident, then it is necessary that everything that is changed is changed by something. For if we assume that what is changed is AB, it will be divisible, since it has turned out that everything which is changed is divisible. Accordingly, let it be divided at C. Then it is necessary that, if CB is at rest, AB too is at rest. For if it is not, let us assume that it is changed, so that while CB is at rest CA would change. Then AB does not change per se. But it was assumed that it changes per se and primarily. So it is clear that if CB is at rest, BA will also be at rest, and will then cease from changing. But if something stops and ceases from changing as a consequence of another thing’s being at rest, then it is changed by something of Aristotle’s proof on this version. However, I will point it out whenever the differences between the two versions are relevant.

² For the view that Aristotle does not intend to reject self-motion entirely but only correct a misconception about self-motion see Simplicius, On Aristotle Physics 7, trans. Charles Hagen (London: Duckworth, 1994), 12–13 (1037.28–1038.19), and Wardy, The Chain of Change, 94–95. In what follows I will refer several times to Simplicius’s commentary, however, note that this commentary was not translated into Latin in the thirteenth century. The traditional view is that Simplicius’s commentary on Aristotle’s Physics was not known to Arabic philosophers, but Michael Chase casts doubts on this view by suggesting that Averroes might had access to a translation of it. See Michael Chase, “Simplicius’s Response to Philoponus’ Attacks on Aristotle’s Physics 8.1,” in On Aristotle Physics 8.1-5, by Simplicius, trans. Istvan Bodnar, Michael Chase, and Michael Share (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012), 10–12.
other than itself. So it is evident that everything that is changed is changed by something. For every object of change is divisible and when its part is at rest the whole will also be at rest.  

Aristotle’s argument can be rendered in the following way:

1. No genuine self-mover is affected when something else comes to rest.

2. Conversion of (1): If what seems to be a self-mover stops its motion when something else comes to rest, then that self-mover is moved by something else and is only apparently a self-mover. (Physics VII.1, 241b33–242a3)

3. (Independent premise) Anything that moves is divisible. (Physics VII.1, 241a39–40)

4. Let AB be a genuine self-mover, that is, something that moves itself per se and primarily.

5. According to (3), if AB were to move itself, AB would need to have parts, for example, AC and CB.

6. If AB is a genuine self-mover, then according to (1) AB should not be at rest when a part of it, say CB, is at rest.

7. Let us assume that CB is at rest.

8. From (2) and (7), it follows that AB is not moving as a whole: one of its parts is at rest!

9. In fact, the only part that remains moving in AB is AC.

10. From (8) and (9), it follows that AB is not moving per se and primarily as premise (4) claims.

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3. See Aristotle, Physica VII.1, 241b26–242a15 (translation by R. Wardy in Wardy, The Chain of Change, 41–43. I choose this translation because it is a translation of version β, the version that was known to medieval authors.)

4. This premise is proved in book VI, for example in VI.4, 234b10–20 and VI.10, 240b8–241a26. In Physics VI.4, 234b 10–20, Aristotle argues that when a thing changes from one state to another, the thing cannot be said to be changing either at the beginning or at the end of the change. So there must be a moment at which the thing really changes. But at this intermediary moment, Aristotle argues, the thing must have two parts corresponding to the two states, the starting-point state and the end-point state. In Physics VI.10, Aristotle argues that a simple whole cannot move itself except accidentally. In arguing for this, he uses the premise that any changing thing must be divisible, but a simple whole is not divisible. On both arguments see David Bostock, Space, Time, Matter, and Form: Essays on Aristotle’s Physics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 176–78. For a lengthier discussion of the argument from Physics VI.4, 234b 10–20, in relation to Averroes and the emergence of the concept of forma fluens see Ruth Glasner, Averroes’ Physics: A Turning Point in Medieval Natural Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 114–27. It should be noted that Aristotle also accepts two kinds of divisibility of motion: in time and according to its parts. See Physics VI.1, 243b 21–25.

5. The so called Translatio vetus of Aristotle’s Physics does not refer to the other part of AB, CA at all: “Dividatur igitur in C. Necesse igitur BC quiescente quiescere et AB. Si enim non, accipiatur moveri. BC igitur quiescente movetur utique BA. Non ergo per se movetur ipsum AB.” See Aristotle, Physica: Translatio vetus, 257. CA is also not mentioned in the variants.

6. The α and β versions differ at this point. α contains the conclusion that AB is not moved per se and primarily which is affirmed in two different sentences at 242a43–44. At 242a 9, β omits ‘primarily’ entirely, while at 249a 10, β omits ‘and’, so that the sentence can either be interpreted by supplying ‘and’ in the light of the corresponding sentence in α or primarily can be understood as an adverb of place, ‘at the beginning’ of the argument. See Wardy, The Chain of Change, 96 (note 4). The Translatio vetus has it “Sed concessum est per se moveri primum.” However, when, for example, Thomas Aquinas...
(11) From (10) and (4), it also follows that AB cannot be a genuine self-mover.

**Conclusion:** If AB does indeed move, then AB must be moved by something else (*Physics VII.1 242a13*), that is, it must be moved by one of its parts.

Given this conclusion, Aristotle can now maintain that everything that is moved is moved by something else.

Aristotle's proof from *Physics VII.1, 241b26–242a15* ends with the conclusion that there is no genuine self-motion because no self-mover can move *per se* and primarily. But what does it mean to move *‘per se’* and *‘primarily’* as premise (4) requires? In what follows, I will explain the meanings of terms *‘per se’* and *‘primarily’*; next, I will discuss how these meanings affect the scope of Aristotle's proof. At the end of this discussion, it will become evident that what role premises (4) and (3) play in making the argument plausible.

### 2.1.1. Per se

In *Posterior Analytics I.4*, Aristotle discusses several ways in which the term *‘per se’* or *‘in virtue of itself’* is used. For medieval students of Aristotle, Robert Grosseteste explains that Aristotle distinguishes three meanings of *per se*.\(^7\) First, the term refers to a mode of being (*modus essendi per se*).\(^8\) A thing that does not have any external cause for its existence is a being that exists *per se* (the only example of such a being is God). Moreover, a thing that does not have a material cause for its existence can also be said to be a *per se* being (in this sense, immaterial substances are *per se* beings, for they lack matter), and, lastly, a thing that does not exist in something else as in a subject can be said to be a *per se* being (substances are *per se* being, while accidents are not). Second, the term refers to a mode of causing

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\(^8\) This use corresponds to the third use of *per se* in Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics I.4 73b6–9*. Jonathan Barnes remarks that although it seems as if with this sense, Aristotle changes the discourse from logic to ontology, this is not the case because “this ‘ontological’ use of ‘in itself’ is founded on considerations of predication.” See Barnes's commentary in Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics: Translation with a Commentary*, trans. Jonathan Barnes, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 114. However, medieval commentators are of a different opinion. For example, Thomas Aquinas notes: “Sciendum est autem quod iste modus non est modus praedicandi, sed modus existendi. Unde etiam in principio non dixit, per se dicitur, sed, *per se sunt*.” See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio Libri Posteriorum (= Expositio Posteriorum)*, lib. 1, lect. 10, n. 6 in Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, 2nd ed., Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita, 1.2 (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1989).
something \textit{per se} as opposed to the mode of causing something accidentally.\footnote{This use corresponds to the fourth use of \textit{per se} in Aristotle, \textit{Posterior Analytics} I.4 73b1–15. It is important to note that while medieval commentators talk here about causality, contemporary authors refer to explanations. For example, Jonathan Barnes writes: “Since ‘incidentally’ may thus signify the absence of explanatory connection, ‘in itself’ may do the opposite job and mark the presence of such a connection.” See Aristotle, \textit{Aristotle, Posterior Analytics}, 117, (Barnes’ commentary).} Thirdly, the term might refer to the mode of predication (\textit{modus dicendi} \textit{per se}).\footnote{This use corresponds to the first two uses of \textit{per se} in Aristotle, \textit{Posterior Analytics} I.4 73a34–73b5.} Only these last two meanings of \textit{per se} are relevant for understanding the argument for the claim that no self-mover moves itself \textit{per se} and primarily. We can interpret the claim that a genuine self-mover is \textit{per se} and primarily moving, either as a claim that (1) a genuine self-mover is a thing of which ‘able to move itself’ is predicated \textit{per se} and primarily or as a claim that (2) a genuine self-mover is a thing that can cause its motion in itself \textit{per se} and primarily.

\textbf{2.1.1.1. \textit{Per se} predication}

Both medieval and contemporary scholars agree about this meaning of \textit{per se} predication: “(1) \(A\) holds of \(B\) in itself = \(df A\) holds of \(B\) and \(A\) inheres in the definition of \(B\); (2) \(A\) holds of \(B\) in itself = \(df A\) holds of \(B\) and \(B\) inheres in the definition of \(A\).”\footnote{See Aristotle, \textit{Aristotle, Posterior Analytics}, 112, (Barnes’ commentary).} Moreover, both medieval\footnote{See Robert Grosseteste, \textit{In Post. An.}, 111–12: “Per se igitur est et dicitur alterum de altero cum unum recipit reliquum in sui diffinitione. Cum igitur genus vel differentia substantialis, a quibus substantialiter et non per accidentes egreditur quidditas speciei, predicantur de specie, est primus modus essendi vel dicendi per se alterum de altero.” See also Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Expositio Posteriorum}, lib. 1, lect. 10, n. 3: “Primus ergo modus dicendi \textit{per se} est, quando id, quod attribuitur alieni, pertinet ad formam eius. Et quia definitio significat formam et essentiam rei, primus modus eius est \textit{per se} est, quando praedicatur de aliquo definitio vel aliquid in definitione positum (et hoc est quod dicit quod per se sunt quacunque insunt in eo, quod quid est, ideo in definitione indicante quid est), sive ponatur in recto sive in obliquo.”} and contemporary scholars agree that the first kind of \textit{per se} predication applies to essential features of things, that is, features that make things be the kind of things they are. Thus, it applies to cases in which generic features or specific differences are predicated of species, as in the examples: “Every man is animal” or “Every man is rational.” But concerning the second kind of predication, there are disagreements. More precisely, contemporary scholars argue that it is not clear whether features of things, which always pertain to them, but do not make up what things specifically or generically are—that is, proper and inseparable accidents—are predicated \textit{per se} in this second way.\footnote{See Aristotle, \textit{Aristotle, Posterior Analytics}, 113–14, (Barnes’ commentary).} For example, they say that it is not clear whether a feature such as ‘capable of laughing’ is predicated \textit{per se} of man. If this feature were predicated of man, then ‘man’ would pertain to the definition of what capable of laughing is. On the
one hand, it is not clear that ‘capable of laughing’ has a definition that allows one to give its generic and specific features; on the other hand, it is not clear that ‘man’ should pertain to the definition of ‘capable of laughing’, if such a definition were to exist. In contrast to modern commentators, medieval commentators agree that the second kind of per se predication (predication per se secundo modo) applies to cases in which features that always pertains to things are predicated of these things. They argue that these features are predicated per se secundo modo of their subjects in virtue of a causal relation that exists between these features and their subjects. Of course, this is not surprising given what I said in the previous chapter about medieval philosophers’ understanding of the relation between propria, inseparable accidents, and substance as a causal relation.

Let us return to Aristotle’s argument to see how the meaning of per se predication applies to it. Since there are two uses of per se predication, there will be two ways to read premise (4) and so also the conclusion of the argument. These ways depend on how ‘able to move itself’ can be predicated of something. On the one hand, to say that something is a self-mover per se primo modo means that the feature ‘able to move itself’ is part of its definition, that is, it is part of what makes it to be the kind of thing it is. On the other hand, to say that something is a self-mover per se secundo modo means that the feature ‘able to move itself’ is a feature that always pertains to that thing, although it is not part of that thing’s essence.

2.1.1.2. Per se causation

Let us see what it means for a genuine self-mover to be such as to cause per se in itself its motion. According to Physics II.5, 196b26, something that causes or moves in virtue of itself or per se is a non-accidental or essential cause. But what is a per se cause? Something is the per se cause of an effect

14 See Robert Grosseteste, In Post. An., 111–12: “Cum autem accidens quod essentiale et non per accidentem egreditur a quidditate subjecti, predicatur de suo subjecto, est secundus modus essendi per se vel dicendi alterum de altero.” See Thomas Aquinas, Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1, lect. 10, n. 4: “Secundus modus dicendi per se est, quando haec praeposito per designat habitudinem causa materialis, prout scilicet id, cui aliquid attribuitur, est propria materia et proprium subjectum ipsius. Oportet autem quod proprium subjectum ponatur in definitione accidentis: quandoque quidem in obliquo, sicut cum accidens in abstracto definitur, ut cum dicimus, quod simitas est curvitas nasi; quandoque vero in recto, ut cum accidens definitur in concreto, ut cum dicimus quod simus est nasus curvus.”

15 See Robert Grosseteste, In Post. An., 112: “In hunc primum modum essendi vel dicendi per se alterum de altero cadunt omnes ille predicaciones que oblique predicant per se causam vel efficientem vel materialem vel formalem vel finalem de suo causato. In omnibus enim istis modis predicandi est predicatum tale quod ipsum recipitur in diffinitione subjecti quod ab ipso predicato habet esse. […] et in hunc modum secundum incident omnia illa que oblique predicant causatum per se de causa per se; omnia enim illa predicata sumunt subjecta sua a quibus habent esse in suis diffinitionibus.” For Aquinas, see the previous note.
because it has a causal power to naturally produce that effect and because, by this causal power, the cause produces its effect always or for the most part.\(^\text{16}\) For example, a builder is the \textit{per se} cause of the house because he possesses the capacity for building houses and this capacity allows him to produce houses always or for the most part. In a different text (\textit{Posterior Analytics} I.4, 73b17–31), Aristotle remarks that between a \textit{per se} cause and its effect there must be a certain regularity, which he considers to be necessary (that is, it happens always or for the most part) and universal (that is, it happens in all situations of the same kind). What ultimately explains the existence of the necessary and universal regularity is the causal power of the cause: such causal power naturally and reliably produces the effect. But there are cases in which the effect does not follow, although it is expected to follow. For example, we expect fire to burn logs, but sometimes fire does not burn a log. In \textit{Metaphysics} IX.5, 1048a 16–21, Aristotle explains that in these cases, the causal power is present, but the necessary conditions for the manifestation of the power are absent. Fire reliably burns logs, because it possesses the relevant causal power, but this power cannot manifest itself when the logs are wet or when they are packed in asbestos.

\textit{Per se} causes are to be contrasted with accidental or \textit{per accidens} causes. An accidental cause is one that does not reliably produce an effect. The effect is not reliably produced because when the effect is caused, it is not caused by a causal power that the cause has. For example, a chef is only an accidental cause of healthy food, because the chef does not have a causal power for reliably producing healthy food—in fact, her causal power is only for producing tasty food. Only by chance does a chef produce a meal that is both tasty and healthy (\textit{Metaphysics} VI.2, 1027a3-5). Thus, what happens in accidental causation is that an effect is produced that the accidental cause does not have a reliable capacity to produce.

But if an accidental cause does not have a causal power for producing the effect, how does the effect come about? To answer this question, let us consider the three examples of accidental causes

that Aristotle mentions: that of the chef that produces healthy foods; that of Polycleitus the sculptor who builds a statue (Physics II.3 195a32–37) and that of the house builder who finds a cure (Physics II.5, 196b25–27 and Metaphysics VI.2, 1026b37–1027a2). In all these examples, the cause as such does not possess the causal power to bring about the effect. A chef as such does not possess a (reliable) power to produce healthy food, since being a chef is about making tasty food; a builder as such does not have any (reliable) power to produce cures, for builders are not doctors. But in all these cases, there is a per se cause of the effect. For example, the tasty food is caused by the chef, and a sculptor is the per se cause of the statue. Moreover, in these cases, the feature in virtue of which the accidental cause is picked up is accidental either to the essential cause or to the effect. For example, Polycleitus is the name of a sculptor, and while a sculptor is the essential cause of a statue, being named Polycleitus is an accidental feature of a sculptor; and although we say that a builder found a cure, the essential cause of the cure was a doctor, who happened to be a builder too. The case of the healthy food is slightly different. One possible interpretation of the case is to say that the food is healthful, not because the chef is also a dietician (a possibility that would make this case resemble the previous two), but because the ingredients used by the chef happen to be healthful. Since the ingredients do not produce healthful food, for they are the matter out of which a chef produces something, the chef is an essential cause of the tasty food, but only an accidental cause of the healthy food. In fact, healthfulness as such is never produced, because it is due to (or supervenes on) the quality of the ingredients. In this case, unlike in the previous ones, there is no essential cause of the healthful food as such, although there is an essential cause of the (tasty) food—the chef. Thus, the cause is picked up not in virtue of a feature that is accidental to the cause, but in virtue of a feature that is accidental to the effect.

What do these examples tell us about accidental causes? According to some contemporary scholars, these examples show that to explain what accidental causes are, we need to refer to two aspects: to a more fundamental essential or intrinsic causal relation, and to a “metaphysical relation of accidental unity.” Indeed, in all the above-mentioned cases, these two conditions are met: (1) there is an essential cause, but (2) we pick up another cause in virtue of a feature which is only accidentally united to the essential cause or to the effect of an essential cause. However, especially the second condition needs to be further specified, for although some features only accidentally pertain to essential causes, they can be essential for producing the same effects. Consider the case of a fire heating

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a pot. In Aristotelian philosophy, heat is an accidental feature of fire: although any fire that we encounter is hot and is always hot, and it cannot exist without being hot, so that heat is a necessary feature of fire, still heat is not part of what makes a fire a fire. Does this mean that heat is an accidental cause of the heating of a pot? Although heat is an accidental feature of fire, heat cannot be only an accidental cause of heating, for it is in virtue of fire being hot that we say that fire is an essential cause of heating. So sometimes it happens that a feature is accidentally united with another feature that plays the role of an essential cause, but we might consider the latter an essential cause of an effect precisely in virtue of the former having a reliable causal power to produce that effect. This means that to define accidental causes we need to add a third condition, namely (3) that the feature that is only accidentally united to the essential cause cannot be a feature in virtue of which the essential cause is the essential cause of the effect.

We can now return to premise (4) of Aristotle’s argument from Physics VII.1. According to this premise, a genuine self-mover should be the per se cause of its self-motion. Given that to be a per se cause of \( \varphi \) means having causal powers that reliably produce \( \varphi \), then premise (4) requires us to assume that a genuine self-mover is a thing that has causal powers that reliably produce its self-motion.

2.1.2. ‘Primarily’

Another term that plays an important role in the description of a genuine self-mover is ‘primarily’: a genuine self-mover cannot move itself primarily. The term is explained in Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics and Physics.

Probably the most well-known meaning of ‘primarily’ is the one from Posterior Analytics I.4, where the term appears in the discussion of the terms ‘universal’ and ‘in virtue of itself’ (per se). A connection between A and B is said to be universal when this connection can be proved in any instance of A and when this connection holds primarily (Aristotle, Posterior Analytics I.4, 73b33–74a 2).¹⁸ For example, ‘having the sum of its interior angles equal to two right angles’ is a feature that pertains

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universally to triangles. On the one hand, any triangle that we consider will have the sum of its angles equal to two right angles; on the other hand, this feature holds primarily of triangles because it cannot be shown to pertain to a triangle in virtue of something other than being a triangle.\(^19\) This also means that if a feature pertains primarily to something, it cannot primarily pertain to any of the species of that thing nor to its genus.\(^20\)

When commenting on Aristotle’s *Physics* VII.1, Aquinas understands ‘primarily’ (*primo*) in the way this term is explained in *Physics* V.1 224a 21–29.\(^21\) This is not surprising, for one expects Aristotle to be consistent with the way he uses his terms: if he introduces the term *primo* in book V of *Physics*, probably in book VII he will use it with the meaning previously introduced. How does Aristotle define *primo* in *Physics* V.1? The term is defined in relation to kinds of change: accidental and essential. A thing accidentally changes when the change is attributed to it because of something external to it. For example, a passenger on a ship changes her location accidentally, for she changes location in virtue of the ship changing its location. A thing changes essentially in two ways. In one way, it changes essentially when the whole thing is said to be changed, but only because a part of it changed. For example, a human being gets healthier because her eyes get healthier. In another way, something changes essentially as a whole, when the whole is said to change and the change can be attributed neither to the whole in virtue of anything external to it nor in virtue of one of its parts. For example, as a whole, a piece of wood is made warmer— neither is there a part of the wood that is made warm and in virtue of which one attributes ‘getting warmer’ to the whole, nor is there any whole of which the piece of wood is a part that gets warmer and in virtue of which the piece is said to get warmer.

Taking *primo* in the sense of *Physics* V.1, premise (4) says that a self-mover can move itself as a whole. This means that the self-mover AB does not move accidentally, that is, by being part of

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19 But one might argue that sometimes the property ‘having the sum of its interior angles equal to two right angles’ is predicated of geometrical figures, as in the sentence “Some figures have the sum of their interior angles equal to two right angles.” Thus, one might think that it is not clear that the property pertains to triangles only in virtue of being triangles. However, when we consider in virtue of what this sentence is true, we see that it is true only because these figures about which the proposition is true are always triangles.

20 For why Aristotle holds this, see Aristotle, *Aristotle, Posterior Analytics*, 119.: “This paragraph either gives a new definition of ‘universally’; or (better) provides, under the alias of ‘primitiveness’, an elucidation of the term ‘as such’; or (best) explains how we are to set about proving that A holds universally of B, in the sense just defined.”

21 See Thomas Aquinas, *In Phys.* 7, lect.1, n. 2: “Si ergo aliquid tale ponatur non moveri ab alio, accipiatur mobile ab, cui quidem moveri conveniat ‘secundum se et primo’, non autem ex eo quod aliqua pars eius movetur. Sic enim non moveretur secundum se, sed secundum partem; oportet autem, si aliquid movet scipsum non motum ab altero, quod sit primo et per se motum; sicut si aliquid est calidum non ab alio, oportet quod sit primo et per se calidum.”
something that moves, nor does it move itself because only one of its parts moves.

2.1.3. Assessing the Proof from Physics VII.1

Premise (4) of Aristotle’s proof requires us to assume that AB is a genuine self-mover, that is, something that moves itself per se and primarily. Given the different meanings of the term ‘per se’, premise (4) can be understood in different ways. In what follows I will go through these possible interpretations to see how the scope of Aristotle’s proof is affected by them. As we will see immediately, these interpretations raise a problem for the proof but dealing with this problem forces us to bring to the fore the importance of premise (3) in the overall proof.

First, let us consider that ‘per se’ is taken in the sense of per se predication. Premise (4) can be read in two ways: either (a) AB is a thing of which the ability to move itself is predicated essentially because it pertains to its essence, or (b) AB is a thing of which the ability to move itself is predicated essentially, but this ability does not pertain to AB’s essence—we can say that it is something that derives from AB’s essence. According to Aristotle’s proof, however, if a part of a thing is at rest, ‘able to move itself’ cannot be predicated per se of that thing. But now it seems that in contrast to Aristotle’s claim we can essentially predicate the ability to move itself, even though a part of the self-mover is at rest. Why is this so? Consider an analogous example: rationality is predicated per se primo modo of human beings, but it does not follow that human beings are not rational if their eyes are not rational. Similarly, if ‘able to move itself’ were per se predicated of a thing AB, either as being a part of AB’s definition or as being derived from AB’s definition, it would not follow that AB is not able to move itself if one of its parts is at rest. For such a consequence to follow, one also has to show that the part at rest is an essential part of AB. Indeed, rationality would not be predicated of human beings, if, for example, human beings were to lack a feature that either is essential for being rational or that necessarily follows from what it means to be rational.

Let us consider that what Aristotle means by AB moving per se is that AB is the per se cause of its self-motion. This would mean that AB has causal powers that reliably produce its self-motion. Again, it is not clear why, if we assume that AB also has parts and one of these parts is at rest, this assumption would make impossible for AB to be the per se cause of its motion. Consider the case of a sculptor who makes a statue. Does it follow that the sculptor is not the per se cause of the statue just because a part of the sculptor, say her foot, is not a sculptor? On the other hand, we will be inclined to say that a person is not a sculptor if that person lacks something that is essential for being a sculptor. Similarly, if we were to assume that the part at rest is in fact an essential part that is necessary for the
self-mover to be able to cause its self-motion, then we might be more inclined to think that the proof works.

It seems that Aristotle’s proof can easily be made stronger if we add an extra premise, namely that the part at rest, CB, is in fact a part that is somehow essential for the self-motion of AB. But can we do this? If we do, then the proof might suffer from an even greater problem. If we assume that the part mentioned in premise (7) is essential for AB to move itself, then we end up with a syllogism that draws a conclusion from impossible premises. In fact, Aquinas mentions such a worry and attributes it to Avicenna. According to Aquinas, Avicenna reasons in the following way: if AB moves itself per se and as a whole, then all AB’s parts need to move, that is, all parts that are required for moving, which is precisely what is required by the claim that the part must be essential for the self-mover to move. But then it follows that Aristotle cannot also put forward premise (7) that a part is at rest: if premise (4) requires us to assume that any part of AB moves, we cannot also assume that a part of AB is at rest.

Maybe the solution to our problem is not to make the proof stronger, but weaker, that is, to identify the cases to which it applies. This is what Thomas Aquinas does. More precisely, he makes an important observation, namely that premise (3)—that motion requires divisibility—is at the core of

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22 See Thomas Aquinas, In Phys. 7, lect.1, n.5: “Sed magis urget obiectio Avicennae, qui obiicit contra hanc rationem, dicens eam procedere ex suppositione impossibili, ex quo sequitur impossibile, et non ex eo quod ponitur aliquid a seipso moveri. Si enim ponamus aliquid mobile a seipso moveri primo et per se, naturale est ei quod moveatur et secundum totum et secundum partes. Si ergo ponatur quod aliqua pars eius quiescat, erit posito impossibilis. Et ex hae positione sequitur impossibile ad quod Aristoteles inducit, scilicet quod totum moveatur non primo et per se, ut posistum est.” The worry seems to be older than Avicenna’s work. According to some interpretations, Galen seems to have been also worried that Aristotle draws a conclusion from impossible premises. The text of Galen does not survive in Greek, but there are fragments of it in the Arabic translation of a treatise of Alexander of Aphrodisias against Galen’s argument. For the entire text of Galen’s argument against Aristotle and the reply of Alexander see Nicholas Rescher and Michael E. Marmura, trans., The Refutation by Alexander of Aphrodisias of Galen’s Treatise on the Theory of Motion (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1965). Although Alexander of Aphrodisias does not understand Galen’s argument as being about syllogisms based on impossible premises, Simplicius takes the dispute to touch on this issue. See Simplicius, On Aristotle Physics 7, 14 (1039.13-20). For other people agreeing with Simplicius, see Pines, “Omne quod movetur necesse est ab aliquid moveri: A Refutation of Galen,” 31; Taneli Kukkonen, “Alternatives to Alternatives: Approaches to Aristotle’s Arguments per Impossibile,” Vivarium 40, no. 2 (2002): 137–73. On the history of arguments based on impossible premises see Christopher J. Martin, “Theories of Inference and Entailment in the Middle Ages” (doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 1999). Galen’s argument is known to Averroes, although it is not clear how he understood it. See Averroes, Commentarius Magnum in Aristotelis De Physico Audito libri octo (= In Physico Audito), VII.1 in Averroes, Commentarius magnum in Aristotelis De physico audito libri octo, Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentaris 4 (Venice: Apud Junctas, 1562), 306. “Et quidam dicunt quod ista demonstratio quam induxit in hoc tractatu non est vera, adeo quod Galenus fecit in hoc tractatum, in quo nititur declarare corruptione istius demonstrationis.” Probably it was through Averroes that it was made known to the medieval Latin commentators, who, however, did not understand it as a worry about syllogisms based on impossible premises. See Thomas Aquinas, In Phys. 7, lect. 1, n. 4: “Contra istam autem Aristotelis probationem multipletier obiicitur. Obicit enim Galenus contra hoc quod dicit Aristoteles, quod si una tantum pars eius mobilis moveatur et reliqua quiescat, quod totum non per se movetur: dicens hoc esse falsum; quia ea quae moventur secundum partem, per se moventur.”
the Aristotelian proof. In short, his point is that Aristotle’s proof stands, because although AB is assumed to be self-moving *per se* and primarily (premise 4), it is also posited that AB is divisible (premise 3). Why is premise (3) relevant for how Aristotle’s proof is supposed to work? Premise (3), by requiring AB to be divisible, puts constraints on whether AB can move itself primarily and *per se*. To move itself primarily requires moving itself as a whole, and not in virtue of a part. But AB, being divisible, cannot be said to move itself primarily *unless* all its parts are moving at the same time—if one part were not moving, AB would be said to move in virtue of the remaining parts and not as a whole. Unfortunately, it is not possible that all the parts of AB move at the same time. This is so because motion takes time, and thus, for AB to move itself as a whole, it would need to move with all its parts in an instant. Thus, since no divisible AB can move itself as a whole in an instant, a part of AB will be at rest, and thus AB cannot be a genuine self-mover.

Aquinas’s defence of Aristotle’s proof has two important consequences. First, it shows that the proof applies to material beings, because their motion requires divisibility. With this claim, Aquinas agrees with Simplicius. Simplicius uses divisibility as well to explain why Aristotle can assume that a part of the whole is as rest:

[Text 2] […] if it is divisible, then, since it does not coincide as a whole with itself as a whole, the mover and what is being moved are not everywhere present to one another, but rather are nowhere present in the same [place]. This is why it is possible in the case of this to assume that some part is not moving and for the whole too to be at rest on account of the account of the part.

According to [Text 2], a divisible whole is one in which the parts are spatially distinct: they are distinct from each other and from the whole. Because of the spatial distinction between the parts, when the whole starts to move, it starts from a part, while the other parts are not moving. Thus, it is possible to assume that a part is at rest, and therefore that the whole stops because of that part.

Second, Aquinas’s understanding of Aristotle’s proof leaves room for the possibility that

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23 See Thomas Aquinas, *In Phys.* 7, lect.1, n. 6: “Sic ergo ostendit Aristoteles causam quare nullum mobile movet seipsum; quia non potest esse primum mobile, cuius motus non dependeat a partibus: sicut si ostenderem quod nullum divisibile potest esse primum ens, quia esse cuiuslibet divisibilis dependet a partibus: ut sic haec conditionalis sit vera: si pars non movetur, totum non movetur, sicut haec conditionalis est vera: si pars non est, totum non est.”

24 The only types of change that take place in an instant are generation and corruption, which are not relevant here, for to my knowledge no medieval philosopher equates self-motion with self-generation or self-corruption.

immaterial beings are capable of something akin to self-motion. Again, Aquinas agrees on this issue with Simplicius, who argues that the proof does not say anything about immaterial wholes, and so it does not apply to them.

[Text 3] Yet if the whole were moving due to itself and not [being moved] by some other thing, but were itself both the mover and what is being moved, it would be necessary for it as a whole to coincide with itself as a whole and to be partless and indivisible, and also, [...] always to be moving: for inasmuch as it does not “depart from itself it never leaves off moving.”

Thus, a whole in which the mover and the moved are the same will be one in which the whole as a whole coincides with itself as a whole. Such a whole will not have spatially distinct parts and will always be in motion.

Thomas Aquinas raises a similar point about immateriality and self-motion. In immaterial beings, there are changes such as the operations of the soul (understanding, sensing, willing etc.), which are only improperly called motions. These operations do not require divisibility, and so they do not fall under the scope of Aristotle’s proof. The consequence of Aquinas’s observation is that since these operations or pseudo-changes are always operations of immaterial substances, something akin to self-motion might be possible in immaterial substances.

What can be said in the end about Aristotle’s proof for the claim that no genuine self-mover can move itself per se and primarily? The assessment of the proof revealed that this proof faces problems that stem from the understanding of the concept of ‘part’. Indeed, recall that premise (3) about divisibility becomes the focus once we try to understand the nature of part mentioned in premise (7). Both Simplicius and Aquinas defend the proof by understanding ‘part’ in a restrictive way, namely as referring to material parts, and thus, commit themselves to the view that the proof works only for material beings. This view leaves open the possibility that something akin to self-motion might happen.

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26 Ibid., 15 (1040.30-1041.1). As modern scholars have remarked, Simplicius is referring here to Plato’s view about the self-moving soul. See notes 44 and 45 by R. Sorabji in ibid., 106.

27 See Aquinas, In Phys. 7, lect. 1, n. 7: “Unde et Platonici, qui posuerunt aliqua movere seipsa, dixerunt quod nullum corporeum aut divisibile movet seipsam; sed movere seipsam est tantummodo substantiae spiritualis, quae intellect seipsam et amat seipsam: universaliter omnes operationes motus appellando; quia et huismodi operationes, scilicet sentire et intelligere, etiam Aristoteles in tertio de anima nominat motum, secundum quod motus est actus perfecti. Sed hic loquitur de motu secundum quod est actus imperfecti, idest existentis in potentia, secundum quem motum indivisibile non movetur, ut in sexto probatum est, et hic assumitur. Et sic patet quod Aristoteles, ponens omne quod movetur ab alio moveri, a Platone, qui posuit aliqua movere seipsa, non dissentit in sententia, sed solum in verbis.”
in immaterial beings, a kind of change that falls outside the scope of Aristotle’s proof.

2.2. No self-mover can move itself as a whole

In *Physics* VIII.5, Aristotle returns to the issue whether genuine self-motion is possible and he attempts to prove that no self-mover can move itself as a whole. While the proof in *Physics* VII.1 is based on the premise that motion requires divisibility, and thus is restricted to changes of material things—the motion of these things requires divisibility—the arguments from *Physics* VIII.5 do not appeal to the divisibility of motion.28

Aristotle offers two proofs for the claim that no self-mover moves itself as a whole.29

2.2.1. First Proof

Aristotle says:

[Text 4] Now it is impossible that that which moves itself should in its entirety move itself; for then, while being specifically one and indivisible, it would as a whole both undergo and cause the same locomotion and alteration; thus, it would at the same time be both teaching and being taught, or both restoring to and being restored to the same health.30

His argument can be formulated in the following way:

1. Let AB be a self-moving thing without parts.
2. If AB moves itself as a whole, AB will at the same time move and be moved in virtue of the same motion.

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28 It is true that in *Physics* VIII.5, 257a33–257b1, Aristotle refers to the principle that motion requires divisibility. But he does not use it as a premise in any of the proofs for the claim that no self-mover moves itself as a whole. In his commentary on book VIII, Graham also argues that this principle plays no role in the argument that start at 257b2–6 because “the kind of parts which Aristotle will ultimately invoke in his analysis of self-motion are not spatial ones.” See David Graham, *Aristotle Physics VIII: Translation with a Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 97.

29 In two important contemporary commentaries on *Physics* VIII, there are no remarks about the existence of two proofs for the claim that no self-mover can move itself as a whole (first proof at 257b2-6; second proof at 257b6-12). For example, both Ross and Graham refer only to what I will discuss as being the second proof. (See Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Physics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 700; Graham, *Aristotle Physics VIII: Translation with a Commentary*, 97.) In contrast, both ancient and medieval commentators have recognized two proofs. See Simplicius, *On Aristotle Physics 8.1-5*, trans. Istvan Bodnar, Michael Chase, and Michael Share (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012), 149–53. See also Aquinas, *In Phys. 8*, lect. 10, n. 3.

(3) Moving and being moved are opposites.

(4) Being one and indivisible, AB will be subject to opposites, which is impossible.

**Conclusion:** AB cannot move itself as a whole.

To make premise (4) more plausible, Aristotle gives several examples: if a thing were to move itself, then the same thing would be teaching and being taught (or learning) by the same activity, or it would be healing and healed through the same health. One might think that both examples are problematic, for some people are self-taught or some doctors can cure themselves. Against this worry, Aristotle would reply that these are cases of *per accidens* self-motion: a person who cures herself can do so because she is accidentally also a doctor; the same can be said about a self-taught person—accidentally, she is also a teacher. So to avoid the objection, we can reformulate premise (4) in the following way: Being one and indivisible, AB will be a *per se* subject to opposites, which is impossible.

At its core, the proof is about the impossibility of a thing having an action and a passion at the same time and in the same respect. This must be so because of the terms used in premise (2), for to move is an action, that is, something that the self-mover does, while to be moved is a passion, that is, something that the self-mover suffers. Thus, premise (2) says that if AB were a self-mover, AB would at the same time have an action and suffer a passion in virtue of the same motion. Premise (3) then says that actions and passions are opposites. But it is not obvious how or why this is the case. To find answers to this question, let us look at Aristotle’s *Physics* III.3.

In *Physics* III.3, Aristotle raises two questions concerning the nature of action and passion: (1) whether actions and passions are the same, for example, whether teaching is the same as learning, and

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31 There is disagreement among ancient commentators on the meaning of being one. While Alexander of Aphrodisias understands being one as being numerically one, Simplicius claims that Aristotle speaks about being one in form, and thus he refers to the ultimate species. See Simplicius, *On Aristotle Physics* 8.1-5, 150 (1234.35-1235.7). In what follows, I will take one in the sense of being numerically one.

32 This premise can be understood in two ways, depending on how one defines motion, namely as a process or as a form/actuality. If motion is taken to be a process, then the premise will read “AB will undergo action and passion in virtue of the same process at the same time,” but if motion is taken to be a form, then the premise will read “AB will undergo action and passion in virtue of being informed by the same form.” On the debate about the understanding of motion, for the view that motion is defined as a process see David Charles, *Aristotle’s Philosophy of Action* (London: Duckworth, 1984), 19–22; for the view that motion is defined as a form or actuality, see L.A. Kosman, “Aristotle’s Definition of Motion,” *Phronesis* 14, no. 1 (1969): 40–62. For more bibliography on the topic, see Mary Louise Gill, “Aristotle’s Theory of Causal Action in ‘Physics’ III 3,” *Phronesis* 25, no. 2 (1980): 145 (note 2).

33 Moreover, the action and passion must be simultaneously. So, the person who teaches herself teaches herself as long as she is taught (or she is learning). For a formulation of this principle see Aristotle, *Physics* II.3, 195b17–20.
(2) what the subject of inherence of action and passion is.\(^{34}\) Although there is no consensus in the contemporary literature on Aristotle’s answer to these two questions,\(^{35}\) there is some agreement among medieval authors.\(^{36}\) Since it is important to see how this argument was understood in the Middle Ages, for both Henry and Scotus are aware of these interpretations, I will briefly discuss Thomas Aquinas’s interpretation of *Physics* III.3.

Aquinas interprets Aristotle as saying that actions and passions are the same one motion, but differ in account (*ratio*). In Aristotelian physics, when something causes a change in something else, this instance of causation is analyzed as an agent acting on a patient. According to Aquinas, Aristotle maintains that when an agent acts on a patient, the action of the agent and the passion of the patient

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\(^{34}\) For the problem concerning the identity of actions and passions see Aristotle, *Physics* III.3, 202a21–202b29. First, Aristotle takes the alternative that actions and passions are two different changes or motions; he then raises the question what the subject of these changes is: is the action in the agent and the passion in the patient or are they both in the patient? After rejecting the view that the action is in the agent and the passion in the patient, he enquires into the possibility that both these motions are in the patient. Concerning this possibility, he then raises a new question: are these motions one or two, that is, are actions and passions different names for the same motion or do the different names track an ontological difference between the two? After presenting arguments against and for the view that the two are one motion, Aristotle gives his answer starting from 202b5.

\(^{35}\) See Gill, “Aristotle’s Theory of Causal Action in ‘Physics’ III 3,” 129–47; Charles, *Aristotle’s Philosophy of Action*, 6–30; Ursula Coope, “Aristotle’s Account of Agency in *Physics* III.3,” ed. John Cleary and Gary Gurtler, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 2005, 201–227; Anna Marmodoro, “The Union of Cause and Effect in Aristotle: *Physics* III 3,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 32 (2007): 205–32. Ursula Coope nicely summarizes the different views on the second topic. See Coope, “Aristotle’s Account of Agency in *Physics* III.3,” 206. “Mary Louise Gill argues […] that ‘both the agent and patient are involved in the motion’ (i.e. in the motion that is the agent’s action and the patient’s change), but she infers that ‘if both are involved in the motion, then both the agent and patient are changed in a single motion’. […] This inference is unwarranted. The agent is involved in the motion because it is a motion of the agent. But this does not imply that the agent is moved. That would only follow if the motion were in the agent. David Charles claims that, for Aristotle, one change cannot be the incomplete actuality of two different potentialities and hence that the agent’s action and the patient’s change must be two distinct changes. His evidence for this is Aristotle’s claim, in *Physics* V 4, that changes are individuated, in part, by their subjects (and hence that it is impossible for one change to have two different subjects). […] On the interpretation that I am defending, the one change that is both the sculptor’s sculpting and the bronze’s becoming a statue only has one subject: the bronze. To say that this is both a change of the sculptor and a change of the bronze is not to say that the change has two subjects. When he is discussing agency, and hence distinguishing between the notions ‘change of X’ and ‘change in X’, Aristotle identifies the subject of a change with the thing that the change is in.” On the first topic, Marmodoro notes that “the vast majority of the commentators, from late antiquity (Themistius, Philoponus, Simplicius) to the Middle Ages (Averroes, Aquinas) on the contemporary commentators (Ross, Gill, Waterlow, Hussey), puzzled by the position Aristotle takes in *Physics* 3.3, read the crucial passage as merely referring to two descriptions of one thing. But the textual evidence supports, in my view, the introduction of two natures, not descriptions, out of which the causal interaction is built.” See Marmodoro, “The Union of Cause and Effect in Aristotle: *Physics* III 3,” 207.

\(^{36}\) Besides the view of Thomas Aquinas that I will discuss in what follows, see that of Giles of Rome, who agrees with Aquinas. See Giles of Rome, *In Phys.*, lib. III, 55vb: “Ad evidentiam primae partis scedendum veritatem quisset in hoc consistere quod actio et passio sunt unus motus et quod ambo sunt in patiente et in non in agente. […] Solvit ad aliud quod videbatur inconveniens dicens quod nihil prohibit unum et eundem actum esse duobus non tamen sicut idem esse, id est non secundum eandem rationem sed sicut quod est in potentia ad agens. Et actio et passio non sunt in passo secundum eandem rationem, sed ut est ab agente dicitur actio ut suscipitur in passo quod est in potentia ad agens dicitur passio.”
are the same motion or change, and differ only in their accounts or how we understand them: the action is the motion insofar as it is from the agent; the passion is the motion insofar as it is in the patient. To understand what Aquinas means by this, consider the following example: Peter teaches John and John is now learning. In this case, we have an agent (Peter) and a patient (John), the action of teaching, and the passion of learning. Learning is a passion because John undergoes a change when he is taught by Peter. Prima facie, the action and passion seem to be two different changes or motions. But there are at least two strong reasons to think that this is not so. On the one hand, it is not clear that the action of Peter amounts to a change that happens in Peter, for Peter does not seem to suffer a change while he teaches John, at least not with respect to teaching—Peter might change from happiness to despair because of John’s lack of interest in learning, but this is not a change in respect to teaching. On the other hand, if we think of teaching and learning as two distinct motions, we overlook the fact that in the end Peter is said to be teaching only when John learns what Peter is teaching, and John is said to be learning only when Peter finishes teaching him. So, the action of Peter and the passion of John are interconnected. Aquinas must think that this interconnectedness is the reason why Aristotle maintains that the action of Peter and the passion of John are the same one motion or change, although they differ in account. Second, Aquinas claims that the action and the passion are in the same subject, namely in the patient. Indeed, if there is a change, it is the patient that must undergo it. Thus, if the action and passion are the same motion or change, then both must be in the patient.

With this understanding of Aristotle’s view about the relation between action and passion, we can return to the first proof in Physics VIII.5. Recall that the proof relies on the premise that action and passion are incompatible properties. But how is this possible if in any change the action of the

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37 Note that the term for account is *ratio*, which can also be translated as ‘nature’. Thus, the way we understand actions and passions tracks an ontological difference between them and it is not arbitrary.

38 See Thomas Aquinas, *In Phys.* 3, lect.5, n. 13: “Et dicit quod finaliter dicendum est, quod non sequitur quod actio et passio sint idem, vel doctio et doctrina, sed quod motus cui inest utrumque eorum, sit idem. Qui quidem motus secundum unam rationem est actio, et secundum aliam rationem est passio. Alterum enim est secundum rationem esse actum huius *ut in hoc*, et esse actum huius *ut ab hoc*. Motus autem dicitur actio secundum quod est actus agentis *ut ab hoc*; dicitur autem passio secundum quod est actus patientis *ut in hoc*.”


40 See Thomas Aquinas, *In Phys.* 3, lect. 5, n. 9: “Dicit ergo primo quod non est inconveniens actum unius esse in altero, quia doctio est actus docentis, ab eo tamen in alterum tendens continue et sine aliqua interruptione: unde idem actus est *huius*, id est agentis, ut a quo; et tamen est in patiente ut recepturn in eo. Esset autem inconveniens si actus unius eo modo quo est actus eius, esset in alio.”
agent and the passion of the patient not only are one motion, but are in the same subject, the patient? Indeed, if the action and passion are always in the patient, why is their presence a problem in the case of a self-mover? The answer lies in the account of action and passion. In cases in which the agent is different from the patient, the action is a motion or change \( x \) insofar as it is \textit{from} the agent, while the passion is the same motion or change \( x \) insofar as it is \textit{in} the patient. So in the case of a thing \( A \) acting on another thing \( B \), action and passion are the same change or motion understood with respect to two different entities, \( A \) and \( B \), but then action and passion cannot really be opposed, because they pertain to different things: one is a motion insofar as it is \textit{from} \( A \), the other is the same motion insofar as it is \textit{in} \( B \). Thus, they can exist in the same subject, namely in the patient. But in a self-mover, either there is no distinction at all between action and passion, or they are two opposed entities. This must be so because the accounts of action and passion refer to the same entity—the agent is also the patient. Indeed, since the self-mover \( (AB) \) is one and indivisible, we cannot say that its action is the motion or change insofar as it is \textit{from} a part of \( AB \), while its passion is the motion or change insofar as it is \textit{in} a different part of \( AB \). Thus, since Aristotle is committed to the view that there is an ontological distinction between action and passion, given that in a self-mover action and passion cannot be distinguished relative to different entities, it must follow that they are completely opposed as premise (3) claims.

2.2.2. Second Proof

The second proof is contained in this passage:

[Text 5] Moreover, we have established the fact that it is the movable that is moved; and this moves potentially, not in fulfillment, and the potential is in process to fulfillment, and motion is an incomplete fulfillment of the movable. The mover on the other hand is already in actuality: e.g. it is that which is hot that produces heat, and in general that which produces the form possesses it. Consequently, the same thing in respect of the same thing will be at the same time both hot and not hot. So, too, in every other case where the mover must have the synonymous property. Therefore, when a thing moves itself it is in one part of it that is the mover and another part that is moved.\(^{41}\)

To understand this proof, it is useful to have in mind an example: a self-mover \(AB\) that can heat itself.

1. If \(AB\) can move something (or heat itself), this is so because it is already in actuality, that is, it already possess a certain form—in our example the form of heat.

2. If \(AB\) can be moved, this is so because it is in potentiality to a certain form, that is, it lacks that form, but is able to receive it.

3. If \(AB\) moves itself, then \(AB\) would at the same time possess and lack the same form [of heat].

**Conclusion:** Thus, \(AB\) cannot move itself as a whole.

Premise (1) and (2) rely on *Physics* III.2, where Aristotle says that something acts insofar it has a form and something undergoes a change insofar it lacks a form.\(^{42}\)

Aristotle starts from the claim that change or motion requires potentiality. More precisely, something is changeable insofar as it is in potentiality. According to one understanding of potentiality, one that can be safely attributed to Aristotle, a thing is said to be in potentiality to \(\varphi\) if it lacks this feature but is able to receive it, that is, it has a passive capacity or power for \(\varphi\).\(^{43}\) For example, a certain surface is in potentiality to heat because it lacks heat, that is, it is not yet hot, but it can get heated. Thus, the lack of heat in the surface and the surface’s capacity for receiving it will explain why when a heat source is posited in suitable proximity to the surface, the surface gets heated.

For change to take place, there must be something in potentiality, but there must also be something actual that can produce the change. A thing is actual insofar it has a certain form or feature and, as Aristotle’s example in [Text 5] suggests, the thing is also able to cause an instance of that feature. For example, fire can make something hot because it is itself hot. The same can be said about an ice cube: it can make something cold because it is itself cold. So, Aristotle’s point in [Text 5] is that a thing \(A\) is changeable insofar as it lacks a feature \(\varphi\) and has a capacity to acquire \(\varphi\) from an agent, which has \(\varphi\) and so can cause \(\varphi\) in \(A\).

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\(^{43}\) See Michael Frede, “Aristotle’s Notion of Potentiality in *Metaphysics Θ*,” in *Unity, Identity, and Explanation in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, ed. T. Scaltsas, David Charles, and Mary Louise Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 173–93. Frede’s understanding of Aristotle’s concept of potentiality is more complex than this. For the time being, however, we do not need to worry about what other meanings ‘potentiality’ has. I will return to a detailed discussion of the concept of ‘potentia’ in future chapters.
The entire proof rests on what contemporary scholars have called the “synonymy principle of causation,”[^1] that is the principle that an agent can cause only what it itself has. For example, an agent can cause a man only if the agent is a man; or something heats something else only insofar as it is hot. This principle is also at the core of the medieval idea of univocal causation, namely the view that the form in the agent and that in the patient are of the same kind.

How is the synonymy principle of causation relevant for the problem of self-motion? Consider a possible self-mover, AB, a thing that is supposed to be able to cause a feature $\phi$ in itself. If the synonymy principle of causation is correct for any case of causation, then AB cannot ever act on itself. If AB is to act on itself, either, given the synonymy principle, it must possess $\phi$, and thus, there is no point in causing it again, or it does not have the feature $\phi$, but then it cannot cause $\phi$ in itself for to cause it, AB must already have it. Thus, if the synonymy principle of causation is correct, self-motion is impossible because it seems that any genuine self-mover must both possess and lack the same feature at the same time. This means that at the core of Aristotle’s argument in *Physics* VIII.5, 257b6–14 is the claim that nothing can give itself something that it does not have: something is able to give itself a certain feature only insofar it already possesses it. But this cannot happen in the case of a self-mover, so self-motion is impossible.

For Aristotle’s argument to work, the synonymy principle must apply to all instances of causal interactions. If it does not apply, then self-motion is possible in cases of causation that are not covered by the synonymy principle. Unfortunately for the defenders of Aristotle’s proof, ancient and medieval philosophers agree that there are cases of causation which do not follow the model of the synonymy principle. Medieval philosophers use the term ‘equivocal causation’ for cases of causation in which, in contrast to univocal cases of causation, the effect does not resemble its cause. There are two well-known examples of equivocal causation that are usually mentioned in analyzing equivocal causation.

[^1]: See Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratics* (London: Routledge, 1982), 68, 92–93. For the relevance of this principle in the context of Aristotle’s proof see Graham, *Aristotle Physics VIII: Translation with a Commentary*, 97. (Note that although scholars refer to Barnes when they mention this principle, Barnes is not the first to refer to this principle. An earlier author who used the idea of synonymy with reference to Aristotle’s view of causality is Franz Brentano; see Brentano, *Aristoteles und seine Weltanschauung*, 62–66). Bodnár names the principle that the agent must possess the form it causes or transmits “the transmission model of causation.” He proposes that to explain elemental motion, Aristotle uses this model in a two-step explanation: the agent is responsible not only for the causation of the property in the element but also for its manifestation. For example, the agent causes both heaviness in a stone and the downward motion of the stone, which is nothing other than the manifestation of heaviness. See Bodnár, “Movers and Elemental Motions in Aristotle.” Not all commentators of Aristotle agree that this proof relies on this principle. For another reading of the argument see Ursula Coope, “Self-Motion as Other-Motion in Aristotle’s Physics,” in *Aristotle’s Physics: A Critical Guide*, ed. Mariska Leunissen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 245–64.
and that I will use many times in later chapters: (1) the sun produces heat, while it is not itself hot;\(^{45}\) (2) water cools itself, when it is warm.\(^{46}\) To modern eyes, these cases look rather dubious—they are based, however, on Aristotelian physical principles usually accepted in the Middle Ages. For example, both ancient and medieval philosophers accept that the sun, being a celestial body, is unchangeable, so it cannot have qualities such as being hot, but, on the other hand, it is obvious that it heats objects; thus, the sun must be an equivocal agent—it produces heat without being itself hot. The example of water cooling itself is especially problematic, for it is not only a case of equivocal causation, but also one of self-motion. According to Aristotle, the nature of water is cold. But it is obvious that water after it is made hot returns to its cold temperature. Of course, the question is whether the water itself causes coldness in itself or is made cold by something else; defenders of self-motion think that the first alternative is the case. One might dismiss these examples as irrelevant, given the obsolete physical principles on which they rest, but there are other cases, maybe more appealing to us, which also do not fall under the model of the synonymy principle of causation. For example, medieval philosophers would count as cases of equivocal causation the case of a cold object producing heat by friction, or that of opium causing sleepiness, or that of a base, for example soap, turning the litmus paper blue, or that of machines able to heat objects by electromagnetic waves. In all these cases, the cause does not possess a quality similar to the one that it produces. For example, soap does not need to be blue to turn litmus paper blue.

### 2.2.3. Assessing the Proofs from *Physics* VIII.5

Commentators on Aristotle do not say much about the first proof. They usually agree that it depends on premise (3), which posits that there is an opposition between moving and being moved. But they diverge on whether premise (3) is obvious or in need of further argumentation. For example, Simplicius claims that only in the second proof does Aristotle show why premise (3) is correct.\(^{47}\) The same interpretation can also be found in Giles of Rome. Giles argues that altering and being altered are incompatible, because they refer to having a form and lacking it, that is, to being in act and in

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\(^{45}\) See Aristotle, *Meteorologica* I. 4, 341b6–10. Aristotle explains that the sun generates heat through friction. Another example of the sun as an equivocal cause appears in *Metaphysics* XII. 5, 1071a11–16, where Aristotle mentions the sun as a cause of different species.


potency, which is precisely the point made in the second proof. On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas takes the opposition between moving and being moved to be obvious, and so the first proof is self-standing.

The second proof enjoys much more attention. Probably the most discussed issue is the question how the scope of the second proof is affected by the synonymy principle of causation on which the proof relies. Simplicius draws attention to this aspect when he says that Aristotle is aware that “not all things […] produce things similar to themselves.” But in the end, he argues that cases of equivocal causation do not pose an insurmountable difficulty for Aristotle’s second proof.

Simplicius’s strategy has two steps. First, he shows that equivocal causation is not an instance of essential or per se causation. He does this by analyzing a case of what one might take to be equivocal causation, namely a whip that produces weals on skin: the whip does not have weals. Simplicius remarks that on a closer look, what happens in this case is that the whip produces essentially or per se forms similar to its own form, but the wounds themselves “supervene accidentally, when numerous small blood-vessels are broken and the blood flows internally.” Thus, the weals are explained by the different way in which the forms of the whip are realized in the patient (that is, on the skin). Second, he claims that the second proof requires that the agent per se cause motion. Thus, Simplicius reads Aristotle’s argument from Physics VIII.5, 257b6–14 in the following way:

(1) Let AB move and be moved per se by itself.
(2) If AB can move itself per se, this is only because it is already in actuality, that is, it already possesses

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48 See Giles of Rome, In Phys., lib. VIII, fol. 198r: “Inconveniens est aliquid totum secundum se totum movens seipsum. […] Notandum autem quod alterans et alteratum […] semper differunt secundum formam nam alterans intelligitur aliquid habens formam, alteratum vero intelligitur aliquid carens forma vel non habens eam in esse perfecto.”

49 See Thomas Aquinas, In Phys. 8, lect. 10, n. 3: “Et hoc videtur inconveniens: quia movens et motum habent oppositionem ad invicem; opposita autem non possunt inesse eidem secundum idem. Non est ergo possibile quod secundum eundem motum sit aliquid idem movens et motum. Cum enim aliquid simul movet et movetur, alius est motus secundum quem movet, et alius secundum quem movetur; sicut cum baculus motus a manu movet lapidem, alius numero est motus baculi et motus lapidis.” He points out that whatever seems to be a mover and a moved at the same time is in fact subject to two motions, not one as the first proof requires: something is moved in virtue of one motion, and it moves in virtue of another motion. For example, a stick is both moved by a hand and moves a stone, but these are two numerically different motions. Probably Aquinas would use the same explanation for the doctor who cures herself: the motion of curing and the motion of being cured are two numerically distinct motions.


51 Ibid., 152 (1236.30-31). Simplicius’s explanation of this case is similar to the example of the chef accidentally causing the healthful food: the chef produces the tasty food, but the healthful food is due to the ingredients.

52 Ibid., 152–153 (1236.31–38).
a certain form, for example the form of heat.

(3) If AB can be per se moved by itself, this is only because it is in potentiality to a certain form, that is, it lacks the form of heat and is in the process of acquiring it.

(4) But then AB would at the same time both possess and lack the form of heat.

Of course, Simplicius’s version of the second argument rests on the premise that all equivocal changes are per accidens changes. But is this the case?

Thomas Aquinas proposes a different strategy to defend the second proof. He recognizes that in some cases, equivocal causation is per accidens causation, but he cannot claim that all cases of equivocal causation are cases of per accidens causation, for that would make the creation of the world, which is an instance of equivocal causation, a case of per accidens causation. Instead he argues that equivocal causation is more fundamental than univocal causation, for the scope of an equivocal cause is larger than that of a univocal cause. For example, according to Aristotle, the sun is the cause of different species, including that of human beings, while a human being is just a cause of another human being, not of the entire species. Furthermore, Aquinas argues that equivocal causation shares an important trait with univocal causation: in both cases, there is a certain similarity between the effect and the cause.

With the help of these two claims about the fundamentality of equivocal causation and its similarity to univocal causation, Aquinas tries to defend the second proof:

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53 See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* (=De veritate), q. 11, art. 2 co in Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, vol. 2, fasc. 1, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita 22 (Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae/ Editori di San Tommaso, 1970), 355. “Duos enim modos principiorum agentium in rebus naturalibus invenimus, ut patet ex philosopho, VII Metaphys. Quoddam enim est agens quod in se totum habet quod in effectu per eum causatur; vel eodem modo, sicut est in agentibus univocis, vel etiam eminentiior, sicut est in agentibus acievocis. Quaedam vero agentia sunt in quibus eorum quae aguntur non praeexsistit nisi pars; sicut motus causat sanitatem, aut aliqua medicina calida, in qua calor inventitur vel actualiter vel virtualiter; calor autem non est tota sanitas, sed est pars sanitatis. In primis igitur agentibus est perfecta ratio actionis; non autem in agentibus secundi modi, quia secundum hoc aliquid agit quod actu est; unde, cum non sit in actu effectus inducendi nisi in parte, non erit perfecte agens.” A warm drink can cause health, because heat, which is present in the drink, is also present as a part in health (according to medieval medicine, health consists in a balance between hot and dry). As in Simplicius’s explanation, the point seems to be that health supervenes on the presence of heat in the body. However, I agree that it is not entirely clear whether Aquinas thinks, as Simplicius seems to think, that this kind of equivocal causation is a per accidens case of causation.

54 See Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 13, art. 5, ad 1 (Piana: 81a-b): “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, licet in praedicationibus oporteat acievocas ad univocas reduci, tamen in actionibus agens non univocum ex necessitate praecedit agens univocum. Agens enim non univocum est causa universalis totius speciei, ut sol est causa generationis omnium hominum. Agens vero univocum non est causa agens universalis totius speciei (aliaque esset causa sui ipsius, cum sub specie continetur), sed est causa particularis respectu huius individui, quod in participatione speciei constituat. Causa igitur universalis totius speciei non est agens univocum. Causa autem universalis est prior particulari. Hoc autem agens universale, licet non sit univocum, non tamen est omnino aequivocum, quia sic non faceret sibi simile; sed potest dici agens analogicum, sicut in praedicationibus omnia univocas reducuntur ad unum primum, non univocum, sed analogicum, quod est ens.”
Text 6] He says this because there are some agents which are not univocal in name and nature (ratio) with their effects. For example, the sun generates a man. Even though the species caused by such agents is not the same in nature (ratio), nevertheless, in a certain higher and more universal way it is the same. And so, it is universally true that the mover is in act in a certain way with respect to that to which the mobile object is in potency. Therefore, if a whole moves itself as a whole, it follows that the same thing is simultaneously in act and in potency, which is impossible.55

At first sight, equivocal and univocal causation seem completely different: in univocal causation, the agent acts in virtue of a form that it transmits to the effect, while in equivocal causation the agent does not acts in virtue of a form that it transmits to the effect. But at a closer examination, we notice that in both univocal causation and equivocal causation, the agent is in actuality; because it is in actuality, it also possesses a form. And, most importantly, Aquinas contends, the forms in the agent and in the effect are similar, for any agent acts something similar to itself.56

What kind of similarity is at work in equivocal causation? While in univocal causation, the cause and the effect have a form similar in nature (secundum eadem rationem),57 in equivocal causation, either (1) the cause possesses a higher or a more universal version of the form that is in the effect58 or (2) the way in which it possesses this form is higher and more universal.59 To explain what Aquinas

55 See Thomas Aquinas, In Phys. 8, lect. 10, n. 4 in Thomas Aquinas, St. Thomas Aquinas’ Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics, 522.
56 See Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles (=CG), lib. 1, cap. 29, n. 270 in Thomas Aquinas, Liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra Gentiles, ed. C. Pera, P. Marc, and P. Caramello (Turin: Marietti, 1961), vols. 2, 42.: “Effectus enim a suis causis deficientes non conveniunt cum eis in nomine et ratione, necesse est tamen aliquam inter ea similitudinem inventiri: de natura enim actionis est ut agens sibi simile agat cum unumquodque agat secundum quod actu est.” See also Aquinas, ST I, q. 4, art. 3, which I quote in the next note.
57 See Thomas Aquinas, ST I, q. 4, art. 3, corp. (Piana: 25b-26a): “Quaedam enim dicuntur similia, quae communicant in eadem forma secundum eandem rationem, et secundum eundem modum, et haec non solum dicuntur similia, sed aequalia in sua similitudine; sicut duo aestae magis et minus; et minus album dicuntur similis magis albo. Et haec est perfectissima similitudo. Alio modo dicuntur similia, quae communicant in forma secundum eandem rationem, et non secundum eundem modum, et secundum magis et minus; et minus album dicuntur similia in albedine. Et haec est perfectissima similitudo.” As is clear from this text, Aquinas’s view about univocal causation is more complex than as I have presented it, but, since I am not concerned here with the case of univocal causation, I do not discuss it in more detail. For a very helpful treatment of equivocal and univocal causation see Norman Kretzmann, The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas’s Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 146–54.
58 See the text quoted in note 55.
59 See Thomas Aquinas ST I, q. 6, art. 2, corp. (Piana: 34a): “Similitudo autem effectus in causa quidem univoca inventur uniformiter, in causa autem aequivoca inventur excellentiunt, sicut calor excellentiiori modo est in sole quam in igne. Sic ergo oportet quod cum bonum sit in Deo sicut in prima causa omnium non univoca, quod sit in eo excellentissimo modo.”
means by “higher and more universal,” let us focus on two of his most frequent examples. God is said to possess the created forms in a more eminent way. On the one hand, this means that God possesses these forms in a more eminent way because he can produce an infinity of these forms (in contrast, a natural agent produces only a finite number of instances of its own form). On the other hand, this means that God possesses these forms in such a way that their nature is affected (for example, the forms of material beings are present in God as divine ideas).  

According to another example, the sun possesses the form of heat in a more universal way or “in respect of power.” Recall that medieval philosophers believed that the sun cannot be hot, but must be able to heat objects. Thus, when it is said that the sun possesses the form of heat in respect of power, this means that the sun can possess only the power to heat but not heat itself. Aquinas adds that this power “is something in conformity with heat,” because the heat in the effect and in the sun are similar in their genus, namely they are both powers.

But is Aquinas’s view about the necessary similarity between cause and effect plausible? One might complain that such a view seems to remove the distinction between equivocal and univocal causes. However, it answers an important worry. Indeed, Aquinas might maintain this view because he is worried about how we can understand causal attributions: is there any ground to attribute the causation of effects to a cause other than the similarities between the two? Add to this that once Aquinas posits that there must be a similarity between the effect and the cause, and given that equivocal causation is not reducible to per accidens causation, he is forced to also accept that this

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60 I follow here Norman Kretzmann’s treatment of equivocal and univocal causation.
61 See Aquinas, CG I, cap. 31, n. 280: “Qui quidem effectus in suis causis sunt virtute, ut calo in sole.”
62 Ibid.: “Ex hac igitur virtute sol calidus dicitur, non solum quia calorem facit, sed quia virtus per quam hoc facit, est aliquid conforme calori.”
63 See Aquinas, ST I, q. 4, art. 3, corp. (Piana: 26a): “Cum enim omne agens agat sibi simile inquantum est agens, agit autem unumquodque secundum suam formam, necesse est quod in effectu sit similitudo formae agentis. Si ergo agens sit contentum in cadem specie cum suo effectu, erit similitudo inter faciens et factum in forma, secundum eandem rationem speciei; sicut homo generat hominem. Si autem agens non sit contentum in cadem specie, erit similitudo, sed non secundum eandem rationem speciei, sicut ea quae generantur ex virtute solis, accedunt quidem ad aliquam similitudinem solis, non tamen ut recipiant formam solis secundum similitudinem speciei, sed secundum similitudinem generis.”
64 One might retort that similarity seems not to be necessary for understanding causation. For example, similarity might help us in tentatively picking out the cause of an effect, but it is unclear why in order to understand a causal interaction we need to posit that agents produce something similar to themselves—we just need to posit a physical law that governs the interaction between agents and their effects. However, Aquinas does not have available the concept of a physical law. On the issue of laws in medieval physics see Marilyn McCord Adams, “Powers versus Laws: God and the Order of the World According to Some Late Medieval Aristotelians,” in The Divine Order, the Human Order, and the Order of Nature, ed. Eric Watkins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3–26.
similarity is not a matter of accidental features. The reason is that since we expect our causal attributions to “carve nature at its joints,” the similarities that ground our causal attribution need to be essential, not accidental. But does his view destroy the distinction between univocal and equivocal causes? Aquinas would reply that his view still manages to preserve the distinction. In equivocal causation, the agent is similar to the effect either because they are the same in genus or because of some kind of analogy between the nature of the agent and that of the effect (as it is the case with God as a cause), while in univocal causation, the similarity between causes and effects is closer: they are similar in nature.

[Text 6] suggests that Aquinas takes the claims (1) that in both univocal and equivocal causation the cause and the effect are similar, and (2) that this similarity cannot be accidental, to be sufficient for defending the generality of the second Aristotelian proof. Recall that the worry with the second proof is that it is limited to cases of univocal causation. But since there are other cases of causation, namely equivocal ones, Aristotle does not conclusively show that self-motion is impossible. However, if any cause, univocal or equivocal, is similar to the effect in an essential way, then this is sufficient for showing that equivocal agents cannot be self-movers. Indeed, an argument along the following lines can be constructed: if two features $a$ and $\beta$ are similar in an essential way (generically or analogically), then if the putative equivocal self-mover has already $a$, then there is no point for it to cause $\beta$ in itself; if the putative self-mover has neither $a$ nor $\beta$, then it cannot cause $\beta$ in itself.

To summarize: initially the issue of equivocal causation seemed to put a serious limitation on the scope of the second proof from Physics VIII (and on the first proof, if we agree with Giles and Simplicius that the first proof is based on the second one). However, this limitation is removed either by showing that the existence of equivocal causation is irrelevant for the proof (as Simplicius’s argument purport ed to show), or by showing that with respect to self-motion equivocal causation is not different from univocal causation (as Aquinas does). Thus, the second Aristotelian proof from Physics VIII seems to stand.

Before discussing Aristotle’s views about what he allows as self-motion, let me draw your attention to an important aspect of these two proofs from Physics VIII.5. Both employ a similar strategy: they show that no self-mover can move itself as a whole, because that would mean that the self-mover has contradictory features. While the proofs tell us what is impossible in genuine self-

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65 See the complete answer in Thomas Aquinas, ST I, q. 4, art. 3, partially quoted in note 63.
motion, they also point out what features the parts of a genuine self-mover are supposed to have: these parts need to be really distinct because they are endowed with distinct abilities or causal powers: one part should be such as to allow for the self-mover to move, to have an action, to bring something about that one does not yet have; the other part should be such as to allow for the self-mover to be moved, to undergo a passion, or to receive something that it does not yet have. The proofs suggest that these parts need to be really distinct because the features they are supposed to carry are really distinct.

2.3. Aristotle’s View of (Apparent) Self-motion

Aristotle defends the possibility of a certain kind of self-motion. The proof from Physics VII.1 and the two proofs from Physics VIII.5 are meant to show that a thing cannot move itself as a whole, primarily, and per se. But not even Aristotle can go against what experience shows us, namely that there are some things that appear to move themselves: animals are the most obvious example. In the rest of Physics VIII.5, Aristotle searches for an explanation of the motion of animals that does double duty: it shows what is peculiar about this motion while at the same time it does not contradict the points raised in the proofs against self-motion. His fundamental insight is that apparent self-movers have parts and thus they move themselves in virtue of their parts.

There are two ways in which Aristotle could have arrived at the claim that any (apparent) self-mover moves in virtue of its parts (Physics VIII. 5, 257b13–14). On the one hand, this claim could have been the consequence of the two proofs against the view that a self-mover can move itself as a whole. Indeed, these proofs, as I mentioned, show that a genuine self-mover would have contradictory features. This further implies that if anything were to move itself, it would need to have distinct parts that can carry those features. On the other hand, the claim can be deduced from Aristotle’s requirement that everything that is in motion needs to be divisible.

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66 There are many studies that deal with Aristotle’s view on self-motion (of animals and of elements). A good introduction to the issue is the collection of articles in Mary Louise Gill and James G. Lennox, eds., Self-Motion from Aristotle to Newton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Other studies that I found useful will be mentioned when I address the relevant issues.

67 Aristotle does not use the qualification “apparent” for these cases of self-motion nor is the term used in the contemporary or medieval discussions of Aristotle’s arguments. I use it only to distinguish these cases of self-motion from the previous ones.

68 See note 4 above.
From the previous discussion, we know that an apparent self-mover $AB$ needs to have two parts $AC$ and $BC$. Furthermore, for $AB$ to move itself, a part, let us say $AC$, must be the mover in $AB$, while $BC$ is the moved part. These parts must be active and passive respectively, for anything moves insofar as it is active and is moved insofar as it is passive. Moreover, by a mover part, Aristotle has in mind a part that plays the role of an efficient cause in the causation of motion (Physics II.7, 198a24–33).

The claim that an apparent self-mover has parts, while these parts play the role of a mover and moved, is still not sufficient to show what is special about apparent self-movers. Indeed, on the criterion given above, any two contiguous parts in a chain of movers would together constitute a self-mover. Thus, Aristotle adds a further claim that one part of a self-mover, namely the moving part or the part having an active power, is a first (unmoved) mover. A first mover is one, “which derives its motion from itself” (Physics VIII. 5 257b18–19) and not from something else. He describes the mover part as a first mover part, because the part that moves needs to be the ultimate origin of a chain of motion. The first mover part is also an unmoved mover. If the part were not a first unmoved mover, then the part would be moved by something else. But if this were so, the whole self-mover ($AB$) would be moved by something else and not by itself.

However, in many cases of (apparent) self-motion, it seems that the motion of the self-mover was in fact started by something outside the self-mover. For example, an animal moves because there is something in the environment that cause it to move. How can a self-mover have an unmoved part if it is moved by something outside itself? Aristotle explains this puzzle when he argues for the claim that the moving part is a first unmoved mover:

[Text 7] Again, there is no necessity for the mover to be moved by anything but itself; so it can only be accidentally that the other part moves it in return. I take then the possible case of its not moving it: then there will be a part that is moved and a part that is an unmoved mover.

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69 This case is different from the case that Ursula Coope raises in her paper on self-motion. She asks whether Aristotle can “distinguish between genuine self-movers (a unified thing, one part of which moves another) and two distinct things, one of which moves the other? For instance, can Aristotle avoid the consequence that when an animal moves a stick, the animal plus stick counts as a self-mover?” See Coope, “Self-Motion as Other-Motion in Aristotle’s Physics,” 246. First, note that Coope uses genuine self-motion for what I call apparent self-motion. Second, in my opinion, Coope’s case is similar to the case of the motion of the soul together with the body, a case that I discuss below.

70 For this argument to work, we need to assume that the part is moved essentially. As we will see, it is possible for the part to be moved per accidens.

What is interesting for us in [Text 7] is Aristotle’s suggestion that a first unmoved mover part can be in fact moved by something other than itself, but this motion would be only accidental (Physics VIII.5 257b20–25). So Aristotle does not reject the possibility that a first mover part be moved accidentally; what he rejects is the possibility that such a part be moved non-accidentally, that is, essentially. This suggestion offers a reply to the case in which food or another item in the environment seem to start the motion of the animal. According to Aristotle’s view, this can happen but we need to keep in mind that the causation is accidental only. Moreover, this suggestion also explains another case: the animal moves itself, with the soul being the first unmoved mover of the body, but the soul is moved while the body is moved. Again, this is possible, but we need to keep in mind that the soul is moved only accidentally by the body.\(^72\)

Aristotle has all the necessary premises to explain how apparent self-movers move. Such a self-mover moves itself because one part of it \textit{per se} moves another part, while at the same time the second part is \textit{per se} moved by the first part.\(^73\) In a short passage, Aristotle also explains how apparent self-movers would differ from genuine ones, if there were genuine self-movers:

[Text 8] If on the other hand the whole is moved by itself as a whole, it must be accidentally that the parts move themselves, and therefore their self-motion not being necessary, we may take the case of their not being moved by themselves. Therefore, in the whole of the thing we may distinguish that which imparts motion without itself being moved and that which is moved; for only in this way it is possible for a thing to be self-moved.\(^74\)

In a genuine self-mover, the parts would only accidentally move themselves. So if a genuine self-mover \textit{AB} moves itself as a whole and \textit{per se}, its parts \textit{AC} and \textit{BC} move each other only accidentally, as parts of the whole.\(^75\) From this, the converse is inferred, when parts move themselves \textit{per se}, as happens in an apparent self-mover, then the whole will only move itself \textit{per accidens}. Thus, in an apparent self-mover, although there is \textit{per se} causation between the parts, the whole moves or is moved only


\(^{73}\) See also Aristotle, \textit{Physica} VIII.5, 258a23–26: “it moves itself as a whole, both being moved and imparting motion through containing a part that imparts motion and a part that is moved. It does not impart motion as a whole nor is it moved as a whole: it is A that imparts motion and B alone that is moved.” (Aristotle, \textit{The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation}, vol. 1, 431). By A and B I take Aristotle to mean the parts \textit{AC} and \textit{BC} of a self-mover \textit{AB}.

\(^{74}\) Ibid. (Aristotle, \textit{Physica} VIII.5 257b33–258a1.)

\(^{75}\) This is similar to the case of the passenger on a ship: the passenger moves but only in virtue of the ship moving. So the sense of accidental motion that Aristotle most likely has in mind is that explained in \textit{Physica} V.1, 224a 21–29.
Let us summarize Aristotle’s view about apparent self-motion. (1) Any apparent self-mover \( AB \) is such that it has parts \( (AC \) and \( BC) \); (2) there must be one part, for example, \( AC \), that is not moved \( \textit{per se} \) by anything—\( AC \) must be an unmoved mover. Moreover, (3) \( AC \) moves \( BC \) \( \textit{per se} \). Although Aristotle does not say specifically that \( BC \) must also be \( \textit{per se} \) moved by \( AC \), we can assume this. Finally, from the parts moving and being moved \( \textit{per se} \), it follows that (4) the motion of the whole self-mover, \( AB \), is not \( \textit{per se} \): when \( AC \) moves \( BC \), it is not the whole \( AB \) that moves itself, and when \( BC \) is moved by \( AC \), it is not the whole \( AB \) that is moved by itself.

This understanding of apparent self-motion seems to allow for a case of self-motion that Aristotle wants to deny: the case of elemental motion. According to Aristotelian physics, the four elements (earth, fire, water, and air) move to their natural places (the earth or the celestial sphere), where they find rest. Aristotle raises the question whether the origin of elemental motion is in the elements themselves, that is, whether the elements are self-movers. But in \textit{Physics} VIII.4, 255a6–19, he argues that that they are not,\(^{76}\) and in doing this, he further explains the features that an apparent self-mover must possess.

Apparent self-movers need to have a certain structure. In contrast, the elements are too simple to be able to move themselves. For something to be able to move itself, that is, to cause and to suffer its own motion, that thing must have a certain structure, namely, it must have distinct parts that can play different roles: one must be able to move and the other to be moved. The elements do not have parts that are so distinct.\(^{77}\) Thus, they cannot move themselves.

Apparent self-movers need to be alive, while the elements are not alive. This is a surprising feature of apparent self-movers and it is not clear why Aristotle thinks that it is a necessary one. It is true that he emphasizes that any self-mover is the originator of its motion: a self-mover, in virtue of one of its parts, must be the origin of the motion of the other part. To be precise, it is the first unmoved mover part that needs to originate motion, which means that only this part will be essentially the origin of motion, while the whole will be the origin of its own motion only in an accidental way.

\(^{76}\) It is important to note that when Aristotle rejects the view that elements are self-movers, he rejects not only the view that they are genuine self-movers, namely that they are able to move themselves as a whole, \( \textit{per se} \), and primarily, but also the view that they are apparent self-movers.

\(^{77}\) One might think that the elements have such parts, for they are composed of matter and form. For a discussion of whether matter and form can work as parts of the self-mover see below chapter 5, section 2.
However, it is not clear why being the source of one’s own motion is a feature that is proper only to living beings. Probably the reason for this claim is that experience shows us that animals are self-movers and there are no scientific explanations that reduce their self-motion to them being moved by something else; in contrast, such explanations are available in the case of elements.

Since they are the source of their motion, apparent self-movers must be able to control their motion, either by stopping it or by changing its direction; but elements cannot do this. So the elements cannot be self-movers. In *Physics* VIII.4, 255a7, Aristotle does not use the term ‘control’, but he remarks that if elements were self-movers, “it would have been in their power to stop themselves.” In interpreting this claim as being about control, I side with a certain contemporary interpretation of Aristotle that understands the notion of ‘having in one’s power’ as referring not to the problem of having alternatives and being able to do otherwise, but to that of having control over one’s own actions.78 What exactly does Aristotle mean by having something in one’s power or having control over something? We normally think that the minimal requirement for control is that the actions over which the agent has control are actions whose causal origin is in an agent. For example, a human being is in control of her motion because she is the causal origin of this motion. This understanding of control reflects what Aristotle means by having something in one’s power, for in the *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1, 1110a16–17 he says that “the things of which the moving principle is in a man himself are in his power to do or not to do.”79 Since previously he defined these things or actions as being voluntary, it seems that for Aristotle voluntary actions are the actions whose cause is the agent and that are in the agent’s power.

The discussion of the case of elemental motion draws attention to an important feature of an apparent self-mover. According to Aristotle, both an apparent self-mover and an element have natural motions, but only the first’s motion is voluntary. What extra feature do voluntary motions have that natural motions lack? Natural motions are the ones caused (in whatever way they are caused) by a thing’s nature, that is, by an internal principle of motion and rest, whereas forced motions are motions

78 In the contemporary literature, the view that Aristotle’s discussion about what is up to us is about the problem of control is one interpretation of Aristotle, one defended by Susan Sauvé Meyer (for other people defending the same interpretation see footnote 9 in Susan Sauvé Meyer, “Aristotle on What Is up to Us and What Is Contingent,” in *What Is Up to Us? Studies on Agency and Responsibility in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Pierre Destrée, Ricardo Salles, and Marco Zingano (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2014), 75–89). According to another interpretation, Aristotle’s discussion about what is up to us concerns actions that are contingent and so could have been otherwise. (For scholars defending this view see note 10 in ibid.).

whose principle is outside the moving thing. For example, the falling of a stone to the ground is a natural motion of the stone, because it is in accordance with its nature; the throwing of a stone upwards in the air is a forced motion, because it is not in accordance with its nature: stones are such that they tend to fall and not rise upwards. On the other hand, an apparent self-mover such as an animal is the origin of its motion in virtue of one of its parts, while this part is the primary essential cause of that action or motion—an apparent self-mover is in control of an action when one of its parts is the primary essential cause of that action. But what kind of cause must this part be? Such a part can only be an efficient cause. Only when the self-mover is the primary or first efficient cause of its action, can we say that the action was voluntary and the self-mover was in control of it. Compare this case with the case of a natural but involuntary motion, such as the motion of the elements, or with the case of forced motion, such as a man pushed by a gust of wind. Neither the four elements nor the man pushed by a gust of wind is in control of their motions. The elements are not in control of their motions, for none of their parts is the primary essential (efficient) cause of their motions, although their motions are in accord with their nature. The man pushed by a gust of wind is not in control of his own motion for none of his parts is the primary efficient cause of his motion: the wind pushes him and he moves because of that. Thus, actions that are in control of the self-mover are voluntary actions, that is, natural actions that are efficiently caused by the self-mover.

2.4. Conclusion

To conclude, let me summarize the main claims that are at the core of Aristotle’s view about genuine and apparent self-motion:

(1) No genuine self-mover can move itself per se and primarily.
(2) No genuine self-mover can move itself as a whole.
(3) Any apparent self-mover has two parts.

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80 Given this analogy, one can understand why Aristotle offers as examples of what is done involuntarily the motion of being carried by the wind or being dragged by somebody against one’s own will: in moving in this way, a thing is compelled in the same way in which the stone’s motion upwards is compelled. See Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 130ff. See also Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* II.6, 1222b16–24.

81 There are different interpretations of Aristotle’s view about the motion of elements. Here I mention the most usual one. I will return to the case of the motion of elements when I discuss Henry of Ghent’s and John Duns Scotus’s views in chapter 5 and 6, respectively.
(4) In any apparent self-mover, one of the parts must be the first unmoved mover of the other part.

(5) Any apparent self-mover moves itself accidentally, while one part moves and the other part is moved essentially.

(6) Any apparent self-mover is a living being.

(7) Any apparent self-mover has control over its own motion.

Not only do these claims allow us to understand the position of Aristotle, but they also point us to the issues that need to be tackled if we want to defend the possibility of self-motion. A quick glance at these claims shows that Aristotle’s views on self-motion, both genuine and apparent, depend on a certain understanding of part and whole and their relationship. Indeed, the term ‘part’ appears in almost every one of the above-mentioned claims, and when it does not appear, either it was mentioned in the proof for the claim (as happens with the proof for claim (1)) or the correlative term ‘whole’ is mentioned in the claim. According to Aristotle, genuine self-motion is not possible because it requires parts with contradictory properties. These properties are the ability to move, to have an action, or to cause something, if the part is supposed to have an active role; or the ability to be moved, to suffer a passion, or to receive something, if the part is supposed to have a passive role. Once we understand Aristotle’s argument to rely on this point, we can easily see the next issues to be addressed to defend self-motion. These issues are: (1) are the parts of the self-mover really distinct from the whole?; and (2) are the properties of the parts really opposites? The first step in addressing these two issues, however, is to understand what an ability or causal power is.
Chapter 3 Causal Powers, Causes and Principles

Any self-mover must be endowed with powers to cause something in itself. To examine the possibility of self-motion, the obvious way to proceed is to explore the nature of these powers and their causal contribution to self-motion. Such a discussion will also be useful for understanding what is meant by the notion of a ‘part’ of a self-mover. Recall that according to Aristotle, in a self-mover there are two parts in virtue of which the self-mover moves, one for moving and another for being moved. Those rejecting self-motion have defended Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VII.1 on the grounds that these parts are spatially distinct and separable. However, identifying the parts of a self-mover with its causal powers raises doubts about this defence, for one can now ask: must we treat the causal powers of a self-mover as spatially distinct, that is, must we consider different causal powers to be located in different portions of matter? By identifying the parts of a self-mover with its causal powers, we can explore issues related to the distinction and separability of these parts, and, in general, we can approach the problem of self-motion in a fresh way.

In this chapter, I will focus on the general question about the role of causal powers in causal explanations in Henry of Ghent’s and John Duns Scotus’s philosophy. To do this, I will discuss what causal contribution causal powers or *potentiae* make to the bringing about of an effect and how this contribution resembles or differs from that of a cause or principle. This discussion will help us understand the functions of causal powers in causal explanations. Once these functions are clarified, it will be easier to see why powers have the nature they have; thus, in the next chapter, I will discuss the ontological nature of causal powers.

This chapter is organized in two sections. The first section deals with Henry’s view on the role of causal powers. The second will be about Scotus’s views on the same issues that I previously discussed in relation to Henry.

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1 In *De anima*, while searching for a definition of the soul, Aristotle uses the term ‘part’ in relation to the capacities of the soul (nutrition, perception, desire, locomotion, etc.). His point seems to be that conceiving the causal powers as parts of the soul helps us understand how the soul is constituted by these capacities, in particular, how these capacities are differentiated from each other. On this discussion in Aristotelian scholarship see especially Jennifer Whiting, “Locomotive Soul: The Parts of the Soul in Aristotle’s Scientific Works,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002): 141–200; Johansen, *The Powers of Aristotle’s Soul*, 42–72; Klaus Corcilius and Pavel Gregoric, “Separability vs. Difference: Parts and Capacities of the Soul in Aristotle,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 39 (2010): 81–120. The same worries that Aristotle discusses concerning the powers of the soul can also be raised concerning the parts of a self-mover.
3.1. Henry of Ghent on the Role of Causal Powers

Causal powers are at work in almost every domain of medieval philosophy. They are present in physics, or natural philosophy, where medieval philosophers talk about substances and qualities as having powers and producing causal effects, especially on other things. In psychology, medieval philosophers talk about the causal powers of the soul. Our soul, according to medieval psychology, has faculties through which it acts. These faculties are conceptualized in terms of causal powers in virtue of which souls can have acts of understanding, volition, perception, etc. Causal powers also appear in ethics. Virtues are dispositional qualities of some of the faculties of the soul (the will, intellect, or sensitive appetite) that enable us to act virtuously.

At the same time, medieval philosophers talk about causes and things being involved in causal interactions. Thus, one question is how ascriptions of causal powers relate to claims about causal interactions. Are causal powers just causes? The same kind of worry can be raised about the notion of ‘principle’. Principles, which refer to the point from where a causal interaction starts, also play a role in causal explanations. So in relation to them, one can ask what their connection with causal powers is.

In this section, I will address these two questions in relation to Henry of Ghent’s view about causality. I will start by discussing about the signification of the notion of potentia or ‘causal power’. Next, I will discuss the relationship between causes and causal powers. In the third subsection, I will address the relationship between causal powers and principles.

3.1.1. The Signification of the Term Potentia

To understand the relationship between causal powers, causes, and principles, we first need to consider how Henry explains the signification of the term potentia. Why should we start in this way? Like such terms as ‘humanity’ or ‘horsehood’, ‘potency’ is an abstract term, which is supposed to refer to an abstract entity. But are potencies abstract entities? One reason to think that they cannot be

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2 The issue of the reduction of causal powers to causes is more complex in contemporary philosophy, due to the analysis of causal powers in terms of counterfactuals. For an excellent introduction to this issue in contemporary philosophy see Jennifer McKitrick, “Dispositions, Causes, and Reduction,” in Dispositions and Causes, ed. Toby Handfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 31–64.

3 The term potentia has many meanings, and while I will discuss these meanings further on (see chapter 7), in this chapter I will focus on the meaning of potentia that refers to causal power (and not, for example, on the one that refers to potentiality).
abstract entities is that while abstract entities are not expected to have a causal role, real potencies are supposed to play such a role. Thus, considering the issue of the signification of the term ‘potency’ can be relevant for answering questions about the ontological status of potencies.

Henry recognizes that many terms that seems to be abstract in fact refer to concrete things. Usually, concrete and abstract terms are understood to refer to things that exist in two different ways, namely as particulars instantiated in matter or existing in a subject, and as abstract entities, that are independent of matter or a subject of inherence.\(^4\) Consider the concrete term album, white thing, and the abstract term albedo, whiteness. The former refers to the quality of being white of a certain object, a quality that exists in a certain subject and is individuated by the subject in which it exists; the latter refers to the quality of being white independently of any subject in which it can inhere—whiteness in this case is not individuated at all. Henry has a slightly different understanding of the meaning of abstract and concrete terms. He agrees that ‘abstraction’ and ‘concretion’ refer to two modes of being, that is, to two ways in which something can exist. But he further claims that abstraction implies simplicity and so a lack of composition, while concretion implies composition.\(^5\) Since only God is completely uncomposed, then only God is truly abstract, and all other things are concrete.\(^6\) Thus, Henry remarks that the modes of being and the modes of signifying are different,\(^7\) that is, that a term might signify a thing in a certain way, while the way of being of that thing is different.

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\(^6\) Ibid., fol. 274r-z: “Et est modus essendi abstracte duplex, vel abstractione rei quae est solum in divinis omnino simplicibus [...] vel abstractione rationis quae est solum in rebus creatis naturalibus et mathematicis, de quo nihil ad praesens. Modus autem essendi concretae est solummodo in creaturis compositis sive existant subsistentem et per compositionem ex alii, sive existant insistentem et per inhaerentiam et compositionem cum alii.” Note that Henry recognizes a kind of abstraction that is done by reason; for example, mathematical objects are abstract by reason alone. But he is not concerned with this possibility.

\(^7\) Ibid.: “Ad cuius intellectum est advertendum quod differunt modus essendi abstracte et modus significandi, quia modus significandi est ex parte nominis significantis et habet solummodo unam divisionem. [...] Modus autem essendi est ex parte rei significantae et habet duas divisiones.” On Henry’s theory of imposition of names in SQO, art. 73, see L. Rosier-Catach, “Henri de Gand, le *De dialectica d’Augustin et l’imposition de noms divins*,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 6 (1995): 145–253.
In *Summa (Quaestiones Ordinariae)*, art. 35, Henry notes that ‘potency’ refers to a composed entity, and, so, to a concrete entity:

[Text 1] Potency (*potentia*) signifies [an essence] as a property related to something else, because it includes in its significate an essence under the account of that property, so that its significate is as it were composed of two items, namely of that subsistent thing that it signifies materially, and that property that it signifies as if it were (*quasi*) formally.

Materially, ‘potency’ signifies a subsistent thing, an essence; quasi-formally, it signifies a property relating to something else, that is, a relational property. In other texts, Henry explains that what is signified formally is that for which the word was imposed (or we can say that the formal signification of the term is its primary signification—this is what the term was introduced to signify); what is signified materially is that in which the thing that is formally signified is founded. Thus, ‘potency’, according to Henry, was imposed or introduced to signify a relational property. Note that Henry applies the qualification ‘as if it were’ (*quasi*) to the formal signification of the term ‘potency’. The relational property to which ‘potency’ refers is as it were the term’s formal signification. My interpretation of this qualification is that Henry means that ‘potency’ was not imposed by the original impositor to mean a relational property, but this is its philosophical meaning now.

What does it mean that ‘potency’ signifies an essence as a relational property? Or more precisely, why does Henry think that ‘having a power’ is like a relational property? To answer this, we need first to understand the notion of ‘relational property’. As its name suggests it, a relational property is a property that characterizes a thing but the characterization is relational in nature. Thus, relational properties share similarities with non-relational properties, for like non-relational properties, such as ‘white’ or ‘long’, relational properties characterize something, but they do it by relating it to something

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8 Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 35, q. 8 in Henry of Ghent, *Summa (Quaestiones ordinariae) art. XXXV-XL*, ed. Gordon A. Wilson, Henrici de Gandavo Opera Omnia 28 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 78.: “Potentia vero significat ut proprietas ad aliquid respiences, quod in suo significato includit essentiam sub ratione illius proprietatis, ut suum significatum sit quasi compositum ex duobus, scilicet ex ipso subsistenti quod significat materialiter, et illa proprietae, quam significat quasi formaliter.” In this text ‘potency’ is taken in the sense of power, for article 35 of the *Summa* deals only with power as a divine attribute, so the meaning of potency as potentiality is excluded.

9 I base my explanation of the two types of signification on Henry’s uses of the same expression “to signify formally and materially” in his definition of *ordo* in *SQO*, art. 52, q. 1 in Henry of Ghent, *Summa (Quaestiones ordinariae) art. XLVII-LII*, ed. Markus Fuhrer, Henrici de Gandavo Opera Omnia 30 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 243.: “Dicendum quod ordo de ratione et significatio sui nominis aliquid importat materialiter ut in quo fundatur et hoc est multitudo sive pluralitas aliqua, quia in uno inquantum unum, nullus potest esse ordo. A liquid etiam importat formaliter a quo nomen imponitur quod denotat quasi dispositionem aliquam circa illa in quibus materialiter vel quasi materialiter fundatur.” Thomas Aquinas also explains these expressions in *De potentia* q. 9, art. 4, corp.
else. However, relational properties are not what we usually mean today by relations. Consider this case: John is the father of Carl. We can envisage the relation between them as an entity that is not only really different from both John and Carl, but also separate from them, as a kind of bridge between the two. But we can also envisage John as *being* the father of Carl. The relation of being the father of Carl is not an entity separate from John, for in fact it is in John: being the father of Carl is a relational property of John. In contrast to contemporary philosophers, medieval philosophers usually think about relations not as ‘bridges’ between the things that are related but as relational properties of things. In *[Text 1]*, Henry has in mind this meaning of relation when he says that “potency’ signifies [an essence] as a property related to something else.”

Given that a relational property characterizes something by relating it to something else, the question is: to what does ‘potency’ relate an essence? Henry says that “it pertains to the nature of a potency insofar as it is a potency that it is spoken of with reference to an act.” Thus, a potency signifies an essence as a property that characterizes the essence in relation to an act—by an act, he means either an operation or an action. For example, Henry says that the human soul has different causal powers such as the intellect, the will, and the senses. Formally, these powers signify properties by which the soul is related to different kinds of operations, such as thinking, willing, perceiving, etc. Similarly, the power of fire to burn also formally signifies a property that characterizes fire in such a way that is related to the act of burning.

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12 See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 35, q. 2 (Leuven 28: 15): “Dicendum ad hoc, quod de ratione potentiae in quantum potentia est quod dicatur ad actum.” I will return to this text in the next chapter.


14 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* III, q. 14 (Badius 1: 68vZ): “Dicatur potentia intellectiva ex comparatione quam habet ad operationem quam secendum se habet elicere. Dicatur vero potentia sensitiva ex comparatione quam habet ad operationem quam habet elicere ut existens in organo. Et dicatur diverse potentiae secundum quod diversimode habet determinari ad diversas operationes specie et intellectuales et sensuales.” It is important to note that in *Quodl.* III, q. 14, Henry mentions twice that powers are defined in relation to acts. Ibid, fol. 68vY: “Potentia enim non definitur nisi ex relatione ad actu.” and ibid., fol. 70rB: “Potentia est enim id quod est dicetur ex relatione ad actu.” Given that on fol. 68r Henry remarked that powers are defined in relation to acts, I understand *ex comparatione* to refer to a relation.
We can now summarize Henry’s view about the signification of ‘potency’. For Henry, ‘potency’ is a term that refers to a composite, concrete item,\(^\text{15}\) one that is composed of an essence and an item similar to a relational property.\(^\text{16}\) For example, the powers of soul signify the essence of the soul as related to different acts or operations, not only the aspect of being related to different acts. In what follows, this remark about powers will be relevant in the discussion of how powers are distinct from causes and principles.

3.1.2. Causes and Causal Powers

Both causes and causal powers refer to something being related to something else. In this subsection, I am interested in whether there is a distinction between how causes and how causal powers relate a thing to something else. To tackle this issue, I will start with a (long) discussion about what causes are.

According to a usual medieval analysis of causation, something is the cause of an effect if, when it is posited, the effect is posited.\(^\text{17}\) To understand what is meant by a cause being posited, we have to supply two conditions from Aristotle’s philosophy. First, according to *Physics* III.1–3, causal interactions are between suitable agents and patients. Agents are entities that can cause something; that is, they have active causal powers. Patients are entities that are capable of suffering or receiving something; that is, they have passive causal powers. Roughly speaking, to manifest their causal powers, agents need suitable patients. For example, a fire does not cause burning if there is no material to be burned. However—and this is the second condition—change cannot occur unless the agent and patient are in adequate proximity for an action to follow. For example, for a log to be burned, it is not sufficient that it is burnable; it also has to be sufficiently close to something else that can burn it, a

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\(^{15}\) Henry’s view seems to be similar to that of Avicenna, who also thinks that the signification of a concrete term is an aggregate or something composed. On Avicenna’s view, see Ebbesen, “Concrete Accidental Terms”; Dominik Perler, “Duns Scotus’s Philosophy of Language,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 161–92. Given that there are no many detailed studies of Henry’s view about signification, my observation should be taken with caution.

\(^{16}\) Does ‘potency’ signify an item that is one *per se* or one *per accidens*? I will discuss this issue in the next chapter.

\(^{17}\) See the next note but also Henry of Ghent, *Quodl. XI*, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fols. 452v-N–453r): “Cum enim talis substantia ex principiis suis sit determinata ad talia accidentia, et se habet ad illa ut qua posita, illa ponunt et de tale consuetum est dici esse causae” (I use 1518 Badius for the *Quodlibeta* edition and 1520 Badius for the *SQO* edition). For a more metaphysical version of this view see Giles of Rome, *Super librum I Sententiarum*, d. 3, pars 2, prin. 3, q. 1, art. 3 in Giles of Rome, *Super librum I Sententiarum*, reprint of the 1492 Venice edition (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1968), fol. 28va: “Respondeo videndum quod si volumus videre quomodo aliquid est causa alterius oportet nos videre quomodo facit ad esse illius quia causa est ad cuius esse sequitur esse alium ut vult Avicenna et Philosophus.”
fire. Thus, by “a cause being posited,” the usual analysis means that an agent and a suitable patient are in adequate proximity for an action to follow.

Imagine the following scenario: you are in a forest camping, the rain has just stopped, you gather some logs for a fire, you throw them on the fire, but they do not burn. In this instance, the agent (the fire) and the patient (the logs) are in adequate proximity, but the action does not follow because there is an impediment: the logs are wet. The existence of impediments raises a problem for the usual analysis: are the two conditions mentioned above sufficient for securing a causal interaction? Or do we need to add a third condition?

In Quodl. X, q. 6, Henry claims that the usual analysis of causation needs to be supplemented:

[Text 2] It is not proved that something is a per se cause by this, [namely] that simply by positing it, the effect is posited, and by not positing it, [the effect] is not posited, but [it is proved by that, namely] that once the impediment is removed, by positing it, the effect is posited and by not positing it, <the effect> is not posited.

He then clarifies:

[Text 3] It must be said that what the objector adds in the end, that “no example can be found in which something being present to something else is moved, and being absent, the other thing is not moved, without that first being the second’s per se moving cause,” is false because

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18 For these two requirements being explicitly mentioned in relation to an analysis of causation see Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodl. VII, q. 6 (PhB 3: 341); Quodl. VI, q. 7 (PhB 3: 151–52); Giles of Rome, Quodl. V, q. 15 (Nempeaus 1646: fol. 311). For Godfrey’s work I used Godfrey of Fontaines, Les Quodlibets cinq, six et sept de Godefroid de Fontaines (Texte inédit), ed. M. de Wulf and Jean Hoffmans, Les Philosophes Belges 3 (Louvain: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de l'Université, 1914).

19 In relation to the usual analysis, note that the way ‘cause’ is defined (something is a cause if, when it is posited, the effect is posited) suggests that causes are simultaneous with their effects. The texts from Henry that I use in this subsection also preserve this suggestion. Thus I have tried to avoid any reference to anteriority and posteriority. However, in other texts, when mentioning what ‘cause’ signifies, and especially in contexts in which causes are distinguished from principles, he seems to introduce a reference to anteriority and posteriority. For example, he says “prout causa describitur quod est id ad cuius esse sequitur aliud.” See Henry of Ghent, SQO, art. 68, q. 2 (1520 Badius, 2: fol. 225rN).

20 Medieval philosophers recognize the existence of two kinds of impediments: external, such as the ones Aristotle mentions in Physics VIII when he talks about stones being impeded from falling by the columns on which they rest, or internal such as the ones usually mentioned by Islamic philosophers when they talk about the causal role of antidotes and drugs. See Aristotle, Physics VIII. 4 or, for example, Algazel’s Metaphysicae pars 1, tract. 1, div. 5 in J.T. Muckle, Algazel’s Metaphysics: A Medieval Translation (Toronto: St. Michael’s College, 1933), 39. On the authenticity of this work of Algazel see Gabriel Said Reynolds, “A Philosophical Odyssey: Ghazzâlî’s Intentions of the Philosophers,” in Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition: In Islam, Judaism and Christianity, ed. John Inglis (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 30–41.

21 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 254): “Et sic non probatur per hoc aliquid esse causa per se quod simpliciter eo posito ponitur effectus et non posito non ponitur, sed quod cessante impedimento, eo posito ponitur effectus et non posito non ponitur.”
such an example can be found in everything in which an agent is joined to a patient and suffers an impediment.\footnote{22}{Ibid.: “Quod autem adiungit in fine quod ‘examplum inveniri non potest quod aliquo praesente aliquid movetur et eo absente non movetur, quin illud sit ei causa movens per se’, dicendum quod falsum est, quia exemplum habetur in omnibus in quibus agens coniunctum est patienti et patitur aliquod impedimentum, quemadmodum contigit in exemplo de scamonea et virtute naturae.”}

First, Henry adds to the usual analysis that when a cause is not posited the effect will not be posited. With this condition he links not only a cause with a specific effect, but also an effect with a specific cause.\footnote{23}{For later arguments against this addition see Aurélien Robert, “L’explication causale selon Guillaume d’Ockham,” \textit{Quaestio} 2 (2002): 245–47.} Second, Henry clarifies that an essential cause is a cause that not only is posited but also is unimpeded. He posits this because impediments can intervene between the agent and the patient in adequate proximity or, as he puts it, an agent and patient that are already “joined.”\footnote{24}{See the text in note 22 above, where I take \textit{coniunctum} to mean “in adequate proximity.” However, there is a case in which it is not clear that Henry thinks the requirement that the cause be unimpeded applies after the requirement for them to be in adequate proximity. Immediately after [\textit{Text 2}], Henry discusses a possible case involving fire being impeded. See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 254): “Et sic probatur quod ignis est per se causa comburens ligna, quia cessante impedimento antequam tangat ligna, cum tangit, comburit et prius non comburit.” This comment can be understood as saying that an impediment applies before fire touches the log. However, it seems more plausible to think that in this comment, Henry is not thinking of the case of wet logs, but about the case, for example, of throwing into fire a log covered in a material that goes between the flame and the wood. For example, Averroes refers to talc as something that can hinder the action of fire. See Averroes, \textit{Taha\fut Al-Taha\fut} (\textit{The Incoherence of the Incoherence}), trans. Simon Van Den Bergh, 1st ed. 1954 (Oxford: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2012), 319.}}

Henry’s condition about the absence of impediments is supposed to explain how a \textit{per se} cause is identified. According to the usual view, a \textit{per se} cause is a cause on the presence of which the production of an effect depends. For Henry, the mere presence of a thing, even when it comes with the presence of an effect, is not sufficient for identifying the effect’s essential cause. There are two ways in which the presence of a thing fails to secure the identification of an effect’s essential cause. On the one hand, a thing might be present, but fail to produce the effect because it is impeded: the wet logs are in the fire, but they do not burn because they are wet. On the other hand, something might be present and even make a difference—an effect is also present—but it is not the essential cause of the effect for it is only a remover of an impediment. For example, the person who removes the column that impedes the falling of a stone is only the accidental cause of the falling of the stone. Thus, Henry thinks that what is left after all the impediments are removed must be the \textit{per se} cause of the effect. When the logs are no longer wet, the fire can be identified as the essential cause of their burning.
From [Text 2] and [Text 3], a certain understanding of causation emerges. Henry calls the remover of an impediment a *sine qua non* cause. When an impediment prevents an effect from being produced, even when the agent and patient are already in adequate proximity for an effect to follow, then what removes the impediment is a *sine qua non* cause, or something without which the agent and the patient could not have produced the effect. By referring to removers of impediments as causes of an effect rather than as conditions, Henry suggests that an effect has more than one cause: it has an essential cause, but what removes an impediment is also a cause. For an effect to be posited, both the essential cause and the remover of an impediment need to be posited. Thus, for Henry, causal interactions are complex situations involving not only an agent and a patient as essential causes, but also other causes which once posited, the effect is also posited. Here he comes very close to the notion of a total cause: an effect is produced by the working together of many causes.

A *sine qua non* cause is a kind of *per accidens* cause. To explain their nature, Henry contrasts them with other *per accidens* causes. Consider the case of a white man building a house: ‘Being white’

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25 On issues related to the debate about *sine qua non* causes see Stephen D. Dumont, “Did Duns Scotus Change His Mind on the Will?,” in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen, Kent Emery, and Andreas Speer, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 28 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 719–794; Peter John Hartman, “Durand of St.-Pourçain on Cognitive Acts: Their Cause, Ontological Status, and Intentional Character” (doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011). My view on *sine qua non* causes differs from these two contributions in two aspects. First, I discuss this concept in relation to the problem of identifying a *per se* cause, an issue that is raised neither by Dumont nor Hartman, who both focus on *sine qua non* causes in the case of the will. But in my view, although the concept is introduced in the context of the causation of acts of the will, Henry does not think that this concept applies to the case of the will alone. So to understand the concept of a *sine qua non* cause, one must detach it from that context. Second, I discuss this concept in relation to the concept of a total cause, and thus I make the point that the concept of a *sine qua non* cause must be distinguished from that of *sine qua non* conditions. Besides the studies mentioned above, other contemporary studies on the medieval discussions about the causal role of impediments and removers of an impediment understood as *sine qua non* causes are André Goddu, “William of Ockham’s Distinction Between ‘Real’ Efficient Causes and Strictly *Sine Qua Non* Causes,” *The Monist* 79 (1996): 357–67; Marilyn McCord Adams, “Was Ockham a Humean About Efficient Causality?,” *Franciscan Studies* 39 (1979): 5–48; Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 741–98. Especially useful and insightful is Robert, “L’explication causale selon Guillaume d’Ockham.” On the causal role of sacraments as *sine qua non* causes for obtaining grace see Marilyn McCord Adams, “Powerless Causes: The Case of Sacramental Causality,” in *Thinking about Causes: From Greek Philosophy to Modern Physics*, ed. Peter Machamer and Gereon Wolters (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 47–76; William J. Courtenay, “The King and the Leaden Coin: The Economic Background of ‘*Sine Qua Non*’ Causality,” *Traditio* 28 (1972): 185–209.

26 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl. IX*, q. 5 in Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet IX*, ed. Raymond Macken, Henrici de Gandavo Opera Omnia 13 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1983), 116–17, and especially Henry of Ghent, *Quodl. X*, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 238): “Quod dicunt, quod ‘nihil est dicta causa sine qua non, quia non est causa nisi agat per se aut per accidens,’ dicendum quod ducet extrinsecus ad causam per accidens. Non sicut per accidens calor generat quia agit in materiam, ipsum praeparando ad generationem: non sic enim agit obiectum in voluntatem, sicceptum praeparando ipsum ad volendum, nisi iam dicto modo. Nec sicut muscum adfectat, quia non muscus possit adfectare, sine obiecto autem cognitto voluntas nihil potest velle. Sed sicut removens prohibens privativa, quia non potest aliquid velle, nisi in notitia intellectus praesens sit ibi obiectum, quod non cognitum etiam absens.” Note that Henry is talking here about the object’s role as a *sine qua non* cause for the causation of the act of the will. However, the same view that the *sine qua non* causes are somehow special is expressed in other passages too; see the next note.
is an accidental cause of the house, for the builder does not build the house in virtue of being white. Henry contrasts this kind of accidental cause with \textit{sine qua non} causes and remarks that ‘being white’ is a \textit{per accidens} cause, which does not have any efficient causal contribution in the production of the house; a \textit{sine qua non} cause, on the other hand, does something, for although it does not directly produce the effect, it does remove an impediment. It plays a role in relation to one of the entities involved in a causal interaction—by removing an impediment that masks an entity’s power—but its contribution to the production of an effect is indirect, while that of a \textit{per se} cause is direct. For example, according to medieval medicine, the presence of too much bile in the body impedes the normal activity of its organs; if a purgative is ingested, the excess bile is purged, and the organs resume their normal activity. The purgative acts directly to purge the excess bile, and in so doing, is instrumental in the organs resuming their activity.\footnote{This example is taken from Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 248–49): “Ad illud quod arguitur quod obiectum voluntatis in eo quod voluntas movet se ipsam, non est causam sine qua non, quia non est causa per accidens ut albedo in aedificando, bene verum est, quia illa nihil agit per se omnino, causa autem, quae proprie dicitur sine qua non, semper aliquid agit per se […] dico quod immo ad modum enim quo scamonea postquam expulit choleram quae impedivit virtutem naturae ne posset infringi, statim virtus naturae infringidat.” I take the nature of the person to refer to the person’s organs; the scammony is the purgative. Henry attributes the example to Algazel; see \textit{Quodl.} IX, q. 5 (Leuven 13: 116–17).} In removing the excess bile, the purgative plays the role of a \textit{per se} cause, but with respect to the production of a patient’s health, the purgative is a \textit{sine qua non} cause, while the \textit{per se} causes of the health of the patient are the organs resuming their normal activities.

Henry’s analysis becomes more interesting when he contrasts \textit{sine qua non} causes with preparatory causes. For example, heat is an accidental cause in the generation of a substantial form, because it works to prepare the matter from which the form will be educed. Many might take \textit{sine qua non} causes to be preparatory causes, for by removing an impediment they allow the essential cause to bring about the effect. But Henry’s point is that they are not preparatory, for \textit{sine qua non} causes are simultaneous with the effect, whereas preparatory causes are prior. Again, Henry hints here at something like a total cause of an effect: \textit{sine qua non} causes are different from preparatory causes, for, together with the essential causes, they are part of the total cause of the effect. To put it slightly differently, preparatory causes are conditions for the cause to produce the effect, and so are not properly speaking causes; \textit{sine qua non} causes are part of the total cause of the effect, and thus are causes properly speaking.

\textit{Sine qua non} causes can act in two kinds of scenarios. They can act to unmask an agent that acts on something else; for example, a purgative becomes a \textit{sine qua non} cause for the health of a
person.\textsuperscript{28} But they can also act to unmask agents that then act on themselves.\textsuperscript{29} This happens in the causation of acts of volition: the will, which is the faculty for making decisions and implementing them, is a self-mover, that is, it determines itself to act without its act being caused by anything external to itself. However, being ignorant of the existence of things impedes me from willing them: if I am not aware of the existence of a book, I cannot have a volition concerning it. When it comes to the causation of my volition to read the book, Henry will say that my knowledge of the book—or of the object presented by my intellect—is not an efficient or productive cause of my volition, but only a \textit{sine qua non} cause: my knowledge removes the ignorance that impeded the will from having a volition about the book. Thus, in this case, the object does not determine the will, but the will determines itself, with the object present only as a \textit{sine qua non} cause.\textsuperscript{30}

Until now I have discussed Henry’s view about causes, but what does he say about powers? To get to this, I need first to refer to Godfrey of Fontaines’s criticism of Henry’s view about \textit{sine qua non} causes. In addressing Godfrey’s objections, Henry distinguishes the role of causes from that of causal powers.

Godfrey criticizes Henry’s \textit{sine qua non} causes for many reasons; here I will focus on two of them. First, he shows that in making removers of impediments \textit{sine qua non} causes, Henry rejects an Aristotelian metaphysical principle (let us call this principle the Exclusion Principle):\textsuperscript{31}

\begin{quote}
[Text 4] When that which is active \textit{per se} is present to that which is passive \textit{per se}, an action follows, and in this any impediment is excluded, as it is clear from Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysics} IX.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{28} See the previous note. The important point is that Henry does not take this example to be a case of self-motion. See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 229): “virtus enim naturae non agit movendo se ipsam neque partem in qua est, sed existens in una parte, puta in corde, movet ad infringandum partem proximam, et sic scamonea non facit aliquid quo facto virtus naturae moveat se ipsam vel id in quo est.”

\textsuperscript{29} In any case of self-motion (which for Henry includes the motion of the elements and the will as well as the case of the water cooling itself) in which impediments can intervene, what removes the impediment is a \textit{sine qua non} cause.

\textsuperscript{30} For Henry’s view about the role of the object as a \textit{sine qua non} see especially \textit{Quodl.} X, q. 9. I will discuss this case in more detail in chapter 5. For secondary literature on this issue see Macken, “La volonté humaine, faculté plus élevée que l’intelligence selon Henri de Gand”; Teske, “Henry of Ghent’s Rejection of the Principle: \textit{Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur}.”

\textsuperscript{31} See Dumont, “Did Duns Scotus Change His Mind on the Will?,” 750. My interpretation of Godfrey’s problem with Henry’s rejection of the Exclusion Principle is different from the one proposed by Dumont. While Dumont takes Godfrey to complain about how the rejection of the Exclusion Principle helps Henry with the case of the will, I add that Godfrey also raises a different point: the rejection of the Exclusion Principle requires a new criterion for identifying \textit{per se} causes, a criterion that Henry cannot offer.

\textsuperscript{32} See Godfrey of Fontaines, \textit{Quodl.} VI, q. 7 (PhB 3: 151): “Quando activum per se est praesens passivo per se sequitur actio et in hoc est exclusum omne impedimentum, ut patet per Philosophum nono Metaphysice.” The principle can be found in Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysics} IX.5, 1048a 5–7.
Godfrey maintains that a suitable proximity of the agent and patient excludes the possibility of an impediment; that is, agents and patients cannot be in adequate proximity and yet also impeded. Note that the Exclusion Principle does not rule out the existence of impediments or removers of impediments. Godfrey accepts that there are impediments in causation, but this is for him nothing other than “saying that the absence of the active from the passive—that is, the absence of an agent from a patient—or the other way around, is an impediment to an action occurring.” For him, removers of impediments are necessary conditions for bringing the agent and patient into adequate proximity, and not, as Henry maintains, *sine qua non* causes for the production of an effect or parts of the total cause of the effect.

Second, Godfrey argues that Henry’s view jeopardizes our understanding of causality:

[Text 5] Who indeed will prove that a log or a certain object is made hot by fire? Indeed, it would be said that it warms itself while the fire is present as a *sine qua non* cause. [...] Because it can be proved that something is active with respect to something only by the fact that when the thing is present, something else is in act, which previously was in potency.

The objection seems to require a way to distinguish cases of self-motion from cases of transeunt causation: if one accepts Henry’s view, then anything can be a cause of its own accidental qualities, that is, anything can move itself in the presence of a *sine qua non* cause. This is how Henry understands the argument. But the objection also raises the issue of how to distinguish *sine qua non* causes from *per se* causes. According to Henry, in any causal interaction it is possible that something plays the role of an essential cause while something else plays the role of *sine qua non* cause. Thus, Henry needs to explain why in a causal interaction, he identifies the causal contributions in the way he does. For example, why is the log the patient, while fire is the agent? Why couldn’t it be that the log burns itself while fire is present only as a *sine qua non* cause? Since Henry also allows for self-motion, Godfrey says, this would be a case that needs to be addressed. Note that Henry’s explanation that essential causes

33 Ibid., 152: “Dicere autem quod potest intervenire impedimentum negativum scilicet absentia objecti, hoc nihil aliud videtur quam dicere quod absentia activi a passivo vel e converso sit impedimentum ne procedat actio.”

34 Ibid., 158: “Quis enim probabit quod ignis generet ignem ex aqua? Dicetur enim quod in aqua est forma substantialis ignis virtualiter quae tamen non efficit se in actum nisi praesente igne ut causa sine qua non. [Idem etiam dici poterit de actibus omnium potentiarum animae, ut patet inducendo] quia enim per nihil potest probari aliquid ens sit activum respectu alterius nisi quia, illo presente, aliud est in actu aliquid quod prius erat in potentia.” I omit the text in brackets so as not to distract the reader from the issues of causation (the sentence merely raises the same problem in the case of the causation of the acts of the soul).

35 Godfrey, on the other hand, does not need to give such a reason. To explain the log’s being burned, he will propose that if the log is not burned, this means that there is an impediment, which prevents the agent (fire) from coming into
are whatever is left after the impediments are removed is problematic, for one can always say that what is left can be further impeded; we just do not have enough knowledge about the impediment.

Because he takes Godfrey’s objection to be a kind of slippery-slope argument, Henry tries to resist it by restricting the cases of self-motion. He argues that we decide on the basis of the nature of things and their causal powers whether a thing is a *per se* cause of an effect or just a remover of an impediment. So in the case of the log, we know that, because of their nature, logs can be burned, and fire has the power to burn them; thus we consider fire to be the essential cause of the burning of the log. In the end, what distinguishes self-movers from non-self-movers, and *per se* causes from *sine qua non* causes, is the things’ natures and whether they have powers for the effects, and *sine qua non* causes do not have such powers. But this reply is not helpful, for to discern a thing’s nature and its powers we need to have access to it independently of causal interactions. Otherwise, whenever we analyze causal interactions according to Henry’s framework, we face the possibility that what seems to be the *per se* cause of an effect is in fact a *sine qua non* cause that removes an impediment—in the end, the existence of a further impediment cannot be ruled out.

Although Henry’s reply to Godfrey is not convincing, it is useful to understand what functions he assigns to ascriptions of causal powers. In Henry’s view, these ascriptions tell us something about how a thing will behave when certain circumstances are met. For example, ascribing to fire the power to heat means that when there are no impediments, fire will heat a suitable and suitably approximated patient, such as a log. These ascriptions also tell us something about how a thing is. For instance, ascribing the power to burn to the fire refers to what fire is, that is, to its nature. Besides these two aims, Henry contends, ascriptions of causal powers help us parse causal interactions; more precisely,

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adequate proximity to the patient (the log); if the log does get burned, this means that the agent and patient came into proximity and so there is no need to entertain the possibility that in fact fire removes an impediment between the agent and patient that are already in proximity.

36 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XI, q. 9 (1518 Badius, 2: fol. 454rG): “Quia natura rei determinata est ad illud ad generante et patitur impedimentum nisi illud consecutatur et similis cum eo. Quando autem natura rei non est determinata ad illud nec adsit impedimentum nec fit in illo, nullo modo in re naturaliter est virtus efficiendi aliquid in seipsa.” See also Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 253): “Ad tertium, quod dicit quod ‘obiectum est per se causa movens voluntatem, quia aliter non potest probari causa movens per se nisi quia, ea posita, ponitur effectus et, ea non posita, non ponitur, ut patet in igne et ligni combustione’, dicendum quod verum est ubi nullum restat impedimentum amovendum, ut contingit in veris motibus corporalibus qui sunt actus imperfecti, secundum quod est imperfectum, ubi corporale movens corporale motum movet per contactum absque omnis impedimenti amotione. Propter quod necessario sequitur quod, si tali sic posito ponitur effectus, et ipso remoto, et effectus removetur, hoc est causa effectus per se. In motibus vero qui propriis sunt operationes et perfectiones, et ideo actus perfecti secundum quod perfectum est, quemadmodum lucere est proprius actus lucis, quibus movens semper se movet nisi sit impeditum, et in quibus potest intervenire impedimentum, non est verum, si tali posito ponitur effectus et eo remoto removetur, quod sit causa effectus per se.” It is unclear to me what relevance Henry’s distinction between perfect and imperfect kinds of motion has for the issue of causality. It might seem that in the passage Henry wants to restrict self-motion to incorporeal entities.
they help us identify the causal contributions of the things involved in causal interactions. This means that in Henry’s view, causal powers are more fundamental than causes, for they explain the types of causes involved in causal interactions and not the other way around.

If causal powers are more fundamental than causes, does this mean that we can get rid of causes in explanations and replace them with explanations in terms of only causal powers? In my view, Henry would not want to reduce causes to causal powers, because causal powers do not have sufficient explanatory scope. Let me explain my suggestion. Causal statements refer to complex situations, for as I said, causal interactions are complex: effects are caused by many things working together simultaneously, some doing the direct efficient causing of the effect, others playing the role of removers of impediments only. But like causal powers, causes also characterize things by relating them to something else. Nevertheless, there seems to be an important difference between causal powers and causes. Even if we agree that both causal powers and causes signify properties by which something is related to an act (note that a cause is related to an effect, which is not always an act—but let us set aside this difference), causal powers and causes differ in how they relate a thing with an act. Causal powers signify a mode of relating a thing to an act based on the thing’s nature. Causes, on the other hand, refer to a thing’s mode of being related to an act based on the presence of other things that are required for bringing about the effect. Indeed, since the effect is present only when the per se cause is unimpeded, with the remover of the impediment being a sine qua non cause of the effect, this means that for something to be a cause, it needs the presence of all the things that are necessary to cause the effect. To put it slightly differently, while a power is grounded in the nature of a thing,37 being a cause is grounded in the presence of all the things that are needed for the effect to be brought about. A per se cause is a slightly different case: for such a cause, being related to an effect is grounded not only in the presence of all the other things that play the role of sine qua non causes, but also on the nature of a thing (as Henry claims in his reply to Godfrey). This distinction in how things are related to their acts/effects suggests that causes cannot be reduced to powers, for powers are too simple: powers cannot track the presence of all the necessary things that are needed for an effect.

37 In the next chapter, I will qualify this claim. As we will see, for Henry, powers are not completely grounded in the nature of things. For a thing to have a power, God has to decide to create a world in which that bearer of the power exists as well as—and this is very important—the act that the thing can bring about through its power. In my interpretation, for Henry, powers are also extrinsically adventent, but in a different way than causes. However, this qualification does not change the claim I make here about the distinction between causes and causal powers. Given that the receiving of powers is something that happens at the moment of creation, if we disregard that moment, powers are indeed grounded only in the nature of things.
As Godfrey correctly observes, at the core of Henry’s view about causes, especially of his introduction of *sine qua non* causes, lies his rejection of the Exclusion Principle. Indeed, by rejecting this principle, Henry accepts that suitable agents and patients can be in the right proximity to each other, but still impeded. Because of this claim, he introduces removers of impediments and makes them *sine qua non* causes of the effect, and, as I have suggested, comes close to the concept of a total cause of an effect. However, there is an important weakness in Henry’s view about causation, namely, that his view about multiple things coming together to cause an effect is couched in terms of impediments and removers of impediments. Henry thinks that multiple things are required for an effect because the thing that usually causes the effect is impeded. He does not theorize about the possibility that even without being impeded, multiple things are needed for an effect. It is precisely this thought, namely that causation is not a simple one-to-one interaction, that Scotus will develop in more detail.

### 3.1.3. Causal Powers and Principles

In the last subsection, I argued that powers are more fundamental than causes, but that causal powers cannot replace causes in explanations because causes are more complex than powers. In this subsection, I will discuss the relationship between causal powers and principles. However, this cannot be done without also saying something about the relationship between causes and principles.

Principles, like causes and causal powers, figure in causal explanations, where their meaning and usage seem to partially overlap. This can be seen, for example, in Thomas Aquinas’s claim that causal powers or potencies are “principles of actions.” Aquinas does not mean that powers are agents of actions, that is, that they are doing the action, even if the term ‘principle’ applies to agents. Powers are principles in the sense that they are “that through which an agent acts.” Thus, ‘principle’ is a term that applies in relations to actions, as ‘power’ is; in contrast to ‘power’, however, ‘principle’ can apply not only to those aspects that play a primarily role in explaining how agents act, but to agents

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38 See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* (=*De Potentia*) q. 2, art. 2, corp. in Thomas Aquinas, “Quaestiones disputatae de potentia,” in *Quaestiones disputatae*, ed. P.M. Pession, 10th ed. (Turin: Marietti, 1965), 9.: “Potentia autem, licet sit principium quandoque et actionis et eius quod est per actionem productum, tamen unum accidit ei, alterum vero competit ei per se: non enim potentia activa semper, per suam actionem, aliquam rem producit quae sit terminus actionis, cum sint multae operationes quae non habent aliquid operatum, ut philosophus dicit; semper enim potentia est actionis vel operationis principium.” Note that in this text, Aquinas engages with a view that powers are relations and rejects it.

39 See Thomas Aquinas, *STI*, q. 41, art. 5, ad 1 (Piana: 262a): “Potentia […] significat id quod est principium; non quidem sicut agens dicitur principium, sed sicut id quo agens agit dicitur principium.”
too. Given that principles apply to agents, it seems that ‘principle’ can replace the term ‘cause’, for, at least, in the traditional understanding of causation, causes refer to agents and patients that, once posited, an effect is posited. But this is not quite the case. Again, Aquinas explains that there are important distinctions between causes and principles. Causes are used in contexts in which what is the cause and what is caused are numerically and even specifically distinct, and one is dependent on the other because one is better or more powerful than the other; principles are used in contexts in which what is a principle and that of which it is a principle are not so distinct, although there is an order between the two. For example, a point is not the cause of a line, but it is the principle of it, because a principle is a first part of a thing. This suggests that although principles can refer to actions and agents, this is not necessary so: most generally, they refer to the origin of something. Moreover, principles are more general than causes, because they can also apply to cases in which the principle and that of which it is a principle might not be different things.

Henry makes few remarks about the relationship between the terms ‘principle’ and ‘cause’. When he does say something on the issue, his observations are like those of Aquinas. For example, he notices that properly speaking ‘causes’ apply in contexts in which one talks about created beings because causation is about the bringing about of a new being. On the other hand, in the divine case (more precisely in the Trinity), one uses such terms as principiation and production, since what is produced or principiated is not a new being, although it is something from the essence of the producer. For example, the production of the persons in the Trinity is a case of principiation, but it

40 See Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 33, art. 1, ad 1 (Piana: 214b): “Principium communius est quam causa, sicut causa communius quam elementum, primus enim terminus, vel etiam prima pars rei dicatur principium, sed non causa. […] Unde hoc nomen causa videtur importare diversitatem substantiae, et dependentiam alcius ab altero; quam non importat nomen principii. In omnibus enim causae generibus, semper inventur distantia inter causam et id cuius est causa, secundum aliquam perfectionem aut virtutem. Sed nomine principii utimur etiam in quae nullum huiusmodi differentiam habent, sed solum secundum quendam ordinem, sicut cum dicimus punctum esse principium lineae, vel etiam cum dicimus primam partem lineae esse principium lineae.” Francis Meehan rightly points out that this text must be interpreted with caution because it suggests that causes and effects are substantially different, but this cannot be case. For a longer discussion of the term ‘principle’ and ‘cause’ see Francis X. Meehan, *Efficient Causality in Aristotle and St. Thomas (A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Philosophy of The Catholic University of America)* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1940), 170–75. On causation in general in Thomas Aquinas see Michael Rota, “Causation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 104–14.

41 See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 68, q. 2 (1510 Badius, 2: fol. 224vM): “Quia accipiuntur aliquando pro principali prout causa descriptur quod est id ad cuius esse sequitur aliud et semper differunt re absoluta causa et causatum. Aliquando autem accipiuntur communiter pro principio et principiato prout in divinis Damascenus accipit causam pro principio, et causatum pro principiato.” Cf. Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 39, q. 8 (Leuven 28: 255): “Productio autem secundum aliquam rationem sibi propriam non potest dici factio, quia quod producitur, non productur in praexistente subjecto, nec de nihilo, sed de substantia produceuntis, et est omnino sine innovatione, ut est productio divinarum personarum in Deo. Productio autem secundum omnem rationem suam actio est, communiter accepto nomine actionis.”
is not a case of causation strictly speaking, for nothing new is brought about. Moreover, although the account of ‘principle’ suggests a certain primacy (in causation or other respects) of what is a principle over what is principiated, and although between a principle and what is principiated there is an order, there is no relation of (temporal) priority and posteriority between them insofar as they are a principle and what is principiated—a principle is constituted as a principle simultaneously with the constitution of what is principiated.42

Henry has more to say about principles and causal powers. In *Summa (Quaestiones Ordinariae)* art. 54, q. 6, he explains the distinction between principles and causal powers.43 Causal powers, active or passive, signify a substance insofar as it is related to an activity or an act, while principles signify a substance insofar as it is related to what is produced. Thus, causal powers are distinct from principles because the former are related to acts, while the latter are related to products. What is the distinction between acts and products? In contrast to acts, which are uncomposed entities, but can be components of something (for example, an act is an accidental feature that might inhere in something, making an accidental unity with its subject of inherence), products are items that have a certain composition.44 To see the difference, consider the case of the fire heating the pot. By saying that fire has a causal power, one says that fire is related to heating or to heat; similarly, by saying that the pot

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42 See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 52, q. 3 (Leuven 30: 261–62): “Ratio autem principii est in aliquibus in quantum habent aliquod primum in suo genere, sive fuerit primum in causalitate, quia ab ipso sunt alia, sive sit primum in naturae dignitate aut simplicitate, sive in situ locali, sive in temporis successione, vel in aliquo aliorum modorum. […] Ratio autem principii et principiati similiter nihil indignitatis important, sed potius dignitatis. […] Ratio autem eius quod est ‘ante’ fundatur in habitudine quam habet res cui convenit ratio principii, ut est res et essentia aliqua, non ut habens rationem principii, ad rem quae respectivum habet res ratione principii, ut similiter illa res quaedam est.”

43 See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 54, q. 6 (1520 Badius, 2: fol. 95vG): “Quartum est nomen quod significat medio modo, sicut essentiam principaliter sed sub ratione et modo respectus sive relationis, ut hoc nomen potentia et hoc nomen principium sed differenter. Quoniam potentia significat substantiam sub ratione respectus ad actum principaliter; hoc nomen vero principium sub ratione respectus ad productum principaliter. […] Potentia non est quid sed ad aliquid, non quod significet puram relationem, ut hoc nomen paternitas, sed quia licet significat substantiam et supponit pro substantia, significat tamen ipsum sub ratione et modo respectus. Principium vero significat substantiam principaliter et sub ratione respectus, sed per modum suppositi, unde supponit pro supposito.”

44 I will discuss more about the compositionality of products in chapter 7 and especially in chapter 8, when I will address the question how agents and patients are constituted according to Henry. However, to substantiate the claim that a *productum* or *principiatum* is something composed, see Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius, 2: fol. 562rP): “Licet in agente et passo ex parte voluntatis non sit aliam differentiarum substantialium pluralitas, quia non sunt nisi una simplex essentia, et sic accessit ei secundum tempus cuius accessione coepit esse agentem, eo quod accidentalis est ei productio eius quod est informatum volitione, quod est unum per accidens compositum ex voluntate ut est vis passiva et volitione. Et sic id in quo voluntas ut agents ex se productum suum producit est aliquid alium quam substantia eius, scilicet ipsa volitio, inquantum ipsum per se productum est compositum ex substantia eius et volitione, sicut a movente extra productum est compositum ex substantia mobilis et moti.” Note that Henry refers to two products of the will, the act of volition and the *per se* product of the will, the composite of the act of volition and the will insofar as it is the recipient of this act. When I talk about the product of a principiation, I mean this *per se* product.
has a causal power to be heated, one says that the pot is related to heating or to heat. When fire is said to be a principle, fire is in a relation, not to heating but to the heated pot. A heated pot is not, however, a simple entity such as heat, but is something composed of a pot (a substance) and heat (an accident).

Causal powers are distinct from principles not only because of their different termini, but also because of what they characterize. While powers signify a substance, or, probably more precisely, an essence, which is characterized as being related to an act, principles signify a concrete substance, a suppositum, which is characterized as being related to another suppositum.45 What makes something a suppositum in created things is that it exists in itself, separated from others and is not apt to exist in another as something pertaining to that thing.46 This means that supposita are complete, that is, they are not constituents of something else, and are also concrete and self-subsisting things. Given this difference between powers and principles, we should say that, for example, fire has a power to heat, while this particular fire is a principle for making things hot. Indeed, for Henry, the term ‘power’ is said about kinds of things, while the term ‘principle’ is used about concrete things. The distinction is important to keep in mind, because it points out that principles are more important in understanding actual, concrete cases of causation, while powers are important in understanding the general connections between things.

Let us return to Henry’s view about what is produced (productum) or principated (principiatum). We have just seen that Henry claims that what is produced, in created beings, is something informed by a form or something having a certain composition. But this claim seems at odds with what somebody in the Aristotelian tradition would maintain occurs in cases of alteration, augmentation, and diminution. For example, one might explain alteration as a change in which a complete concrete self-subsisting being or a component of such a being brings about a quality in another complete concrete self-subsisting being. For example, a fire brings about heat in a pot. In this case, the product of this change is not a whole self-subsisting thing: the heat is just a quality that inheres in the pot. A similar

45 See Henry of Ghent, SQO, art. 54, q. 6 (1520 Badius, 2: fol. 95vG): “Unde tam hoc nomen potentia quam hoc nomen principium significant substantiam principaliter, sed sub ratione respectus et hoc sub indifferentia quaedam et indeterminatione […] et cum hoc, hoc nomen principium supponit pro supposito sub indifferentia et indeterminatione quadam.”

explanation can be made for augmentation and diminution. Henry has a different explanation of change: in the case of the fire heating the pot, a self-subsisting thing (fire) causes another self-subsisting thing to be in a certain way (a heated pot). So the product of alteration is not a quality that inheres in something, it is something that is altered in a certain way; the product of an augmentation or diminution is not a quantity, but a thing that suffered a certain increase or decrease in quantity.

Henry’s view is not unreasonable. On the one hand, as some contemporary scholars have remarked, in maintaining this view about change, Henry follows Aristotle, who in Metaphysics VII.8, 1033b16–17, says that what is produced is the concrete thing, not its form. On the other hand, if in alterations the product of a change is just the quality, then it is unclear in what sense we can talk about the alteration of a thing. For something to count as being altered, that thing needs to have a new quality. So, the product must be the thing together with its new quality, not just the new quality alone.

If principles principiate or bring about the product, what is the role of causal powers in principiation? Recall that a principium is a suppositum as it is related to a product, which is usually (or, better said, in the case of created things) another suppositum as it is informed by an accidental property (a quality, quantity, location etc.). One of these supposita brings it about that the other suppositum is informed by an accidental property or an act, and it does this in virtue of having a power by which it is related to that act; the other suppositum receives the act in virtue of having a power by which it is related to that act. Thus, while supposita act and suffer, powers seem to be that on account of which the supposita act or suffer. This last claim, however, needs to be qualified.

To see how the claim that powers are that on account of which the supposita act and suffer, we need to look into what Henry understands by “that on account of which these supposita act (the ratio

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This must be so, given the fact that in Quodl. XIV, q. 2 (the text on which this discussion about principiation is based), Henry discusses not only the case of divine production (which is similar to generation), but also the case of the causation of acts of will (which is similar to alteration).

See JT Paasch, Divine Production in Late Medieval Trinitarian Theology: Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 39. Because Paasch’s interest is in divine production, which is more similar to generation, he does not discuss other cases of change.

agendi) or suffer (the ratio patiendi).”

Henry discusses these notions in a text from his *Summa (Quaestiones Ordinariae)*, where he addresses the question whether the divine essence acts. One might be inclined to say that the divine essence acts, because in God there are only absolute and relative items (such as the divine essence and different real relations). Since according to Aristotle’s *Physics* relations cannot act, the only remaining possibility is that the divine essence acts.

Henry argues that the divine essence, like any other essence, cannot be properly said to act. He is committed to the view that something acts insofar as it exists in actuality. But essences subsist only insofar as they pertain to supposit, as their parts. As parts, they are less perfect when compared to the whole, since they cannot exist except as a part of the whole. But since they are less perfect than the whole, they are less actual than it. Thus, since something acts insofar as it exists in actuality, what acts, or the agent, must be the supposit and not the essence. Since essences do not act, neither do powers, for they pertain to essences and do not subsist by themselves.

50 The distinction between an agent and that on account of which something acts is also in Aquinas. See Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 22, art. 12, corp.: “Ad cuius evidentiam sciendum, quod tam finis quam efficiens movere dicuntur, sed diversimode; cum in qualibet actione duo considerentur: scilicet agens, et ratio agendi; ut in calefactione ignis est agens, et ratio agendi calor.”

51 See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 39, q. 3 (Leuven 28: 182-83): “Ex quo ad idem arguitur secundo sic. Nihil in divinis potest esse agens nisi sit absolutum et respectivum, quia in Deo secundum duo praedicamenta quae sunt in ipso, non est nisi res absoluta aut respectiva, ut patet ex supra determinatis. Sed respectivum in quantum respectivum, non agit, quia respectus non est principium actionis, sicut neque terminus, secundum Philosophum ergo in Deo nihil agit nisi absolutum in quantum absolutum. Tale autem non est in Deo nisi ipsa divina essentia, ut habitum est supra. Ergo etc.”

52 Ibid., 184–85: “In Deo autem, licet nihil sit nisi id ipsum quod est divina essentia, et quidquid in ipso est, simpliciter in fine perfectionis et actualitatis est, absum omni imperfectione et potentialitate admixta, differente ab actu re vel intentione, […] tamen est in eo considerare aliquid ut quod est alterius, et aliquid ut cuius est. Verbi gratia, deitas forma quaedam, ut patet ex questionibus praehabitis contra unitatem Dei, ipsa tamen in se, ut deitas est, non subsistit ut habeat rationem suppositi absoluti, sed solummodo subsistit in supposito, relativa proprietate constituto. […] In quo quidem supposito deitas ipsa et ipsa relativa proprietates se habent ut quae sunt alieius, et ipsum suppositum se habet ut cius sunt illa.”

53 Ibid., 184: “Dicendum ad hoc, quod in eis quae sic se habent ad invicem, quod unum corum est aliquid alterius, et reliquam est sicut id cuius est alterum, et hoc qualitarecumque ponantur dierferre sive ratione sive intentione sive re, semper id quod sic se habet ut quod est aliquid alterius, se habet respectu eius cuius est, ut aliquid imperfectum, et ens in potentia, quod ordinatur ad illud cius est, sicut ad ens perfectum in actu. […] Propter quod dicit Philosophus, VIII Physicorum, quod pars aut nihil est, aut in potentia; ‘totum vero semper est ut aliquod perfectum actu existens, in quo suam actualitatem et perfectionem habent omnes partes eius’. Nunc autem sic se habet in activis, quae sunt principia actionum ut agentia, et in passivis, quae sunt termini recipientes in se alterius actionem ut patientia, quod agens omne in quantum agens, est aliquid perfectum in actu existens. Propter quod actio omnis agentis aliquo modo imperfecti ad agens perfectum reductur, et est dispositio nobilis in eo in quo est.”

54 Ibid., 186: “Cetera enim omnia divina se habent ut aliquid suppositi seu aliquid existens in supposito, ut sunt ipsa divina essentia, relativa proprietates, et universales omnia essentialia attributa, veluti sunt potentia, sapientia et cetera huissmodi. Ideo dicendum simpliciter, quod nulli talium proprii loquendo debet attribui actio aliqua ut agenti, et ita quod divina essentia nullam agat actionem, sed suppositum omnes.”
Although essences, because they are parts, do not act, they are what accounts for an action. Henry explains that what accounts for an action is something formal in the suppositum, which in created things is either the essence of the suppositum or a quality of it. For example, a hot thing is the agent of heating, but what accounts for the action of heating is heat; the same reasoning applies to thinking: what thinks is the whole human being, but what accounts for thinking is the human soul.\(^{55}\)

Powers are also relevant for explaining action. Recall that powers formally signify a property of a thing, a way of characterizing a thing as being related to an act, that is, to an action or a passion. Henry clarifies what this amounts to: first, because of a power, an essence is related to an act and has “almost an inclination” to elicit this act; second, powers account for the diverse acts that an essence can elicit.\(^{56}\) The first aspect is so important that Henry claims that:

[Text 6]: in no way can [an essence] be what accounts for that act unless it is related in a certain way to it and it is in a certain way ordered to it.\(^{57}\) So unless an essence is determined to an act, or unless it has a power, the essence cannot be what accounts for an action or passion. But, Henry further remarks, the power does not elicit the act (as an essence does). Because no essence can elicit an act without a power, Henry agrees that the power enters into what accounts for an action or passion.\(^{58}\) So it seems that the determination of an essence to an act is, to use a term so dear to Henry, only a *sine qua non* condition for the eliciting of the act.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 187: “Actio dupliciter attribuitur alicui: uno modo ut agenti; alio modo ut illi quod in agente est agendi ratio; secundum quod calefacere attribuitur calido, et calefaciendi calori quo informatur, ut rationi agenti, et intelligere attribuitur animae vero ut rationi qua intelligitur, secundum determinationem Philosophi 1° De anima. Primo modo, ut dictum est iam, actio attribuitur soli supposito. Secundo modo attribuitur alicui quod est formale in supposito.”

\(^{56}\) See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 39, q. 4 (Leuven 28: 197): “Sed quia huiusmodi actiones divinae differentes sunt inter se, et non est differentia in actionibus nisi ex differentia ex parte principii elicitiivi, […] divina autem essentia, sub ratione qua est essentia, nullam rationem differentiae in se habet, […] si in se aliquam habeat, oportet quod hoc sit ab aliquo sibi supervenienti, essentiae autem divinae nihil potest supervenire nisi ratio respectus. Essentia ergo, ut sit ratio differentium actionum, oportet eam in se differre, saltem secundum rationes diversorum respectuum. Qui circa ipsam essentiam duo faciunt. Unum scilicet, ut per ipsos essentia respiciat actus, et quasi inclinationem habet ad ipsos eliciendos, cum secundum se, absque ratione omnis respectus penitus absolutum ‘quid est’. […] Aliud vero, ut penes differentiam ipsorum, ipsi essentiae determinarentur actus differentes, cum secundum se nullum omnino determinat, et ideo nullum determinare eliceret nisi ab aliquo sibi determinatetur.”

\(^{57}\) Ibid.: “Nunc autem nullo modo posset esse ratio agendi ipsum actum nisi aliquo modo ipsum respiceret, et ad ipsum aliqua modo ordinaretur.”

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 198: “Et sic ad agendum actum aliquem a persona divina ut a principali agente, duplex ratio qua agit eum, requiritur: una ut qua ipsum [corr. from ipsum] elicit, alia ut qua eiliens actum respicit, et determinatur sibi actus. Primo modo dico, ut iam dictum est, quod sola divina essentia secundum rationem essentiae est ratio agendi omnes divinas actiones, scilicet in eliciendo ipsas. Secundo vero modo dico, quod respectus fundati in divina essentia sunt ratio agendi a Deo divinas actiones, scilicet in determinando ipsas ut eliciantur, ita videlicet, quod unica est ratio omnis eiliens, scilicet ipsa divina essentia sub sua ratione absoluta qua essentia est, plures vero sunt rationes determinantes secundum pluralitatem actuam, scilicet ipsi respectus diversi.”
For Henry, principles are the only items that act to bring about products; but how does a product come about through the working together of principles? Recall that something is a principle by having a relation to a product. In the case of created beings, as I mentioned, the product is something having a certain composition: it can be a heated pot or a plant (in generation). In fact, it is the suppositum having a passive power that enters into the constitution of the productum: a pot receives heat and becomes a heated pot; matter receives the form of a plant and becomes a plant. Thus, for Henry, one suppositum insofar as it has an active power, and another one insofar as it has a passive power, together principiate the product. But note an important aspect: while both supposita principiate the product, their principiation is of different kind: the active principle principiates by bringing about the product, the passive principle as something pertaining to the product, by composing the product.

For Henry, the actual bedrock of causal interactions is principles. Yet powers are needed to account for why the supposita act or receive, that is, why they become principles, but they themselves do not do anything. Therefore, for Henry powers are neither causes nor principles. Their contribution is just to be part of the account of why things act—recall that things act in virtue of some formal aspect in them, their essence or some quality, but this formal aspect becomes that in virtue of which things act only when it is so characterized that it is related to a certain act, that is, it has a power for that act.

3.2. John Duns Scotus on the Role of Causal Powers

In the first questions of his Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics, book IX, John Duns Scotus clarifies the meanings of potentia. In this section, I am interested in only one of these meanings, namely the one according to which potency refers to a principle.59 Scotus is not alone in agreeing that this is one of the meanings of ‘potency’; as we have seen, Thomas Aquinas also envisages potencies or causal powers as principles (of action). But recall that although Aquinas thinks that potencies are principles, he explains that they do not do anything—they are not agents—but they are that through which something acts. In some ways, Aquinas’s view is similar to Henry’s: what acts is the agent, not the power. However, while for Aquinas the power is that on account of which something acts, for Henry that on account of which something acts is something formal in the agent, an essence or a quality,

while the power only pertains to that account. So when Scotus agrees with Aquinas that a power is a principle, will he also treat powers as that on account of which something acts? As we will see, Scotus’s view about the causal contribution of powers is very different from that of Aquinas or Henry.

This subsection has three parts. In the first part, I start with a discussion of the signification of the term ‘potency’ (and ‘principle’). Then, I discuss Scotus’s view about causes. In the last part, I explain the connection that Scotus sees between causes, causal powers, and principles.

### 3.2.1. Potency, its Cognates and its Signification

To explain what ‘potency’ as a principle signifies, Scotus deals with the same conundrum that Henry had to deal with: ‘potency’ seems to be an abstract term that refers to an abstract entity, but potencies or powers are supposed to have causal roles. In contrast to Henry, Scotus looks not only to the term ‘potency’ but also to related terms such as potentiality (*potentialitas*) and the potent (*potens*), and, of course, to the terms principle (*principium*), principiation (*principiatio*), and that which principiates (*principians*).

Why is it necessary, for analyzing the signification of ‘potency’, to also look to the whole semantical family of this term? ‘Potency’, ‘potent’ and ‘potentiality’ are paronyms, or denominatives, that is, they are terms that are derived from the same stem but are distinct because of different endings. The existence of paronyms raise an important question: do these terms signify different ontological entities or do they refer to the same entity but in different ways? Thus, to find the correct signification of ‘potency’, it makes sense to look to other terms that are related to it.

Scotus first addresses the general question of how paronyms signify in his commentary on the *Categories*. He starts from the claim that paronyms are concrete accidental terms, for they refer to concrete things. They are formed from abstract terms and signify the same item, namely a form, and not the subject in which the form inheres. For example, the abstract term ‘whiteness’ (*albedo*) and

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60 On the problem of paranomy in medieval philosophy and on Scotus’s position on this issue see especially Ebbesen, “Concrete Accidental Terms”; Costantino Marmo, “Ontology and Semantics in the Logic of Duns Scotus,” in *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*, ed. Umberto Eco and Costantino Marmo (Amsterdam PA: John Benjamin, 1989), 168–80; Knuuttila, “Concrete Accidental Terms”; Perler, “Duns Scotus’s Philosophy of Language.”

61 On the dating of this work and its authenticity, see the introduction in John Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in libros Porphyrii Isagoge et Quaestiones super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, xxvi–xxxiv.

the concrete term ‘white’ (album) signify the accidental form of whiteness and not the subject of inherence of whiteness, namely a surface. Despite signifying the same item, the abstract term and its concrete counterpart cannot always be predicated of the same subject. This is so because while an abstract term signifies an essence or a form according to its proper account (for example, ‘whiteness’ signifies the accidental form of whiteness insofar as it is whiteness, and nothing more), a concrete term signifies an essence or form, but this essence is understood insofar as it informs a subject. As Scotus clarifies, the concrete accidental term *album* signifies the form of whiteness, but also gives to understand the subject of inherence of whiteness. Thus, concrete accidental terms differ from their abstract counterparts not in their signification, that is, what they represent to the intellect, but in what they give one to understand, that is, how they represent it.

In *Lectura* I, d. 5, q. un. (and in the later *Ord. I*, d. 5, pars 1, q. un.), Scotus qualifies his view about the signification of paronyms. He remarks that accidental forms can be submitted to two levels of abstraction: not only can accidents be abstracted from their subject but also from their *supposita*. This means that ‘whiteness’ is not the most abstract term that can be formed from white—more abstract than whiteness or albedo, is albedineitas66, or whitenesshood, a term that signifies the quiddity or common nature of whiteness as it is abstracted from its *suppositum*.67 But what exactly does it mean

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64 See Scotus, *In Præd.*, q. 8, n. 19 (OPh 1: 319): “Nomen autem concretum non principaliter constituit intellectum subiecti, sed dictum ex hoc quod illud, cuius primo intellectum constituit sub tali modo intelligendi, ad subiectum dependet et ita significat ipsum. Hoc est, ex tali modo significandi dat intelligere, quod non est significare ut nunc loquimur de significatione, quae est representatio aliquius ex impositione.”

65 See Scotus, *Quaestiones super librum Elenchorum Aristotelis*, q. 15, n. 17 in John Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in libros Perihermenias Aristotelis, Quaestiones super librum Elenchorum Aristotelis, Theoremata*, ed. Robert R. Andrews et al., Opera Philosophica 2 (St. Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute, 2004), 336.: “Significare est aliquid intellectui repraesentare.” Scotus’s view about signification is more complex than I present it here. As Dominik Perler has argued, Scotus maintains that a word signifies the representational content of an intelligible species, which is the essence or quiddity of a thing. On the issue of signification and whether Scotus is a semantical representationalist see the works of Perler mentioned in note 15 above.

66 See Scotus, *Lect. (=Lect.) I*, d. 5, pars 1, q. un., n. 22 (Vat. 16: 418): “Sed concretio accidentis duplex est, nam accidens concernit suum proprium subiectum, et etiam concernit suum suppositum. Et ideo duplex est abstractio accidentis: una ipsius accidentis a subiecto, quod est alterius naturae, ut albedinis a ligno; et facta ista abstractione, adhuc concernit suum suppositum, et ideo alia abstractione abstrahitur a concretioni sui suppositi, - ut sicut humanitas ab homine quae concernit suppositum, sic albedineitas ab albedine quae concernit hanc albedinem et illam sicut sua supposita.”

67 See Scotus, *Ord. I*, d. 5, pars 1, q. un., n. 20 (Vat. 4: 19–20): “Sed ulterius est abstractio quidditatis a supposito qualis dicta est fieri in substantiis, et illam circunloquimur per hoc quod dicimus quiditas albedinis – et illa non concernit aliquid subiectum nec eiusdem naturae nec alterius.”
for an accident to be abstracted from its suppositum? An accident is a quiddity that has an aptitude for inhering in a subject; at the moment when that accident inheres in a subject it is individuated. So when an accidental form is abstracted from its subject alone—for example, whiteness from a wall—whiteness is still individuated, and so it signifies an individuated accidental form—this whiteness—but it does not signify its subject of inherence—the wall. To get a more abstract form than whiteness, one needs to abstract from whatever makes whiteness an individual. Albedineitas signifies precisely the accidental form of whiteness insofar as it is not individuated.

Potentiality, potency and being potent, and principiation, principle, and principians are the equivalent of albedineitas, albedo (whiteness) and album (white). Let us start with the abstract term, ‘principiation’. This term signifies the relation of principiation, that is, the relation between what principiates (or causes or produces) and what is principiated (or caused or produced). The term ‘principiation’ signifies this relation in the most abstract way, without giving to understand anything about what might be its foundation (for example, heat) or the subject in which its foundation inheres (for example, fire)—the term does not refer to anything outside the account of that relation. Being so abstract, the term ‘principiation’ cannot be predicated essentially of any absolute thing (substance, quality, quantity), because that would mean that the absolute thing is a relation.

According to Aristotle, since no relation can principiate or cause something, only absolute (that is, non-relational) concrete things are principiating something. But how can the relation of principiation be predicated of these non-relational concrete things? To find an answer, Scotus inquires into the concrete counterparts of the term ‘principiation’. From the abstract term ‘principiation’, two denominatives or concrete terms are formed corresponding to the two ways in which the relation of principiation can be made more concrete. First, there is the term ‘principle’, which essentially signifies the relation of principiation, but also “gives one to understand” the foundation of this relation. Because of what it gives to understand, ‘principle’ can be predicated of an absolute concrete term; for example, it can be predicated of heat. Although ‘principle’ signifies the relation of principiation (heating), it also gives one to understand the foundation of the relation of principiation. But heat itself is just a form that inheres in something, for example, in fire. While heat is the foundation of the relation of principiation, fire is the subject of this relation because it is the subject in which the

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foundation inheres. The term ‘principians’ is the most concrete way in which the relation of principiation is still essentially signified. This term signifies the relation of principiation, while it gives one to understand the subject in which the foundation of this relation inheres.  

The terms ‘potentiality’, ‘potency’, and ‘potent’ behave similarly to ‘principiation’, ‘principle’ and ‘principians’. Like the term ‘principiation’, ‘potentiality’ is an abstract term that signifies the same relation of principiation, abstracted from both its foundation and its subject. The terms ‘potency’ and ‘potent’ are concrete accidental terms. Like any concrete accidental term, they signify a form, namely the same relation as ‘potentiality’ does. However, they differ because ‘potency’ essentially signifies this relation insofar as it concerns its foundation, while ‘potent’ signifies it insofar as it concerns the subject in which the foundation inheres.

The outcome of this analysis of the signification of ‘potentiality’, ‘principiation’, and their cognates is that their significata cannot play the role of actual potencies and principles. This is so because these terms signify a relation between something causing or producing and that which is produced. But we already know from Aristotle that relations are not the right kind of entities to cause anything. Since both potency and principles signify relations, it seems that their significata cannot do what we expect principles or powers to do, namely to cause or produce something. Nor can the significata of the most concrete terms, potens and principians, serve as principles or powers, for concrete accidental terms signify a form, which form, in their cases, is again a relation.

If the significata of potentiality, principiation, and their cognates are not the kind of entity that can do actual work in causation or principiation, then what are the entities able to do this work? That


70 See Scotus, QSM IX, qq. 3–4, n. 20 (OPh 4: 543): “Consimiliter omnis dominus est de potentialitate, potentia et potente, quod eandem relationem importat. Primum in abstracto, alia duo in concreto, sed diversimode secundum quod illa relatio nata est diversimode denominare fundamentum proximum et remotum sive subjectum.” See also Scotus, Ord. I, d. 5, pars 1, q. un., n. 21 (Vat. 4: 20) for a similar analysis of the terms ‘causa’ (the equivalent of potentia/principium), ‘potentia causandi’ (the equivalent of potentialia/principio) and ‘causalitas’ (the equivalent of potentialitas/principatio).
such entities must exist from the use of these terms in causal explanations. Scotus’s answer is that the entities that these terms give one to understand or denominate are the one that in fact do the causal work we say powers and principles do. Concrete accidental terms not only signify things, but also denominate or give one to understand. For example, ‘potency’ can stand for what it essentially or per se signifies, that is for a relation, but it also refers to what it denominates, namely the foundation of this relation.  

Given this, Scotus concludes that at its core, the debate about the nature of potency or principle is not about the nature of their significata, but about what kinds of entity are denominated by these terms. Should one call ‘potency’ the foundation of the relation of principiation alone? Or should one use the term for the foundation together with all the circumstances that need to be in place for an act to be elicited?

Scotus agrees with Henry that ‘potency’ is a concrete term for its significate is not simple. ‘Potentia’ signifies both the relation to an act and the foundation of this relation, an essence, albeit differently. According to Henry, that for which the word ‘potency’ was imposed, that it, its formal signification, is a relation—this kind of signification is the equivalent of Scotus’s signification. But the word ‘potency’ also signifies materially the foundation of this relation—according to Scotus, ‘potency’ “gives one to understand” the foundation of this relation. Note, however, that while for Scotus potentia signifies only the relation of principiation, for Henry it signifies both a foundation and what characterizes this foundation to be related to an act. This difference has consequences for issues pertaining to philosophy of language—for example, how to understand predication. This difference is also a sign of their distinct views about the ontology of causal powers, as I will show in the next chapter. But although there are important differences between Scotus and Henry, there are also

71 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 7, q. 1, n. 30 (Vat. 4: 119): “Dico quod hoc nomen ‘potentia’ potest sumi pro eo quod per se significat, vel pro eo quod denominat – quod est ‘proximum fundamentum alias relationis’.” See also QISM IX, qq. 3–4, n. 20 (OPh 4: 543): “Sicut autem alia concreta communiter accipimus pro subiectis in quantum habent tales formas, ita frequenter quando dicimus ‘potentiam’, non intelligimus de respectu, sed de illo in quo fundatur respectus.”

72 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 7, q. 1, n. 32 (Vat. 4: 119–120): “Secundo modo est difficultas quaestionis inquiringo quid sit illud ‘absolutum’, quod est fundamentum proximum istius relationis.” See also Lect., I, d. 7, q. un., n. 35 (Vat. 16: 485): “Unde non quaerat quaeestio quid sit essentialet potentia generandi secundum quod potentia - potentia enim secundum quod potentia respectus est - sed quaeerit de fundamento istius relationis potentiae. […] Similiter quando quaeritur quid sit potentia animae, non quaeritur de respectu quem potentia importat, sed quaeritur de fundamento.”

73 These questions will get a complete answer in chapter 8.

74 Dominik Perler remarks this in comparing Avicenna’s view about how concrete and abstract term signify with that of Scotus. (But Avicenna’s view seems similar to Henry’s.) See Perler, “Duns Scotus’s Philosophy of Language,” 173.
important similarities: both agree that *potentia* is a kind of concrete term and that one cannot understand this term unless one refers to the foundation of the relation that is signified by it.

3.2.2. Causes and their Relations

To understand Scotus’s analysis of potency as a principle, first we should understand how causes are related in causation.\(^{75}\) This is so because Scotus applies to potencies or principles an important observation that he reaches in the context of his analysis of causes. Like Henry, Scotus agrees that effects have multiple causes. Scotus, however, is able to use this insight in a way Henry could not. As we have seen, Henry develops this insight in the context of his discussion of removers of impediments as *sine qua non* causes, that is, in the context of the causal contribution of accidental causes. Scotus, on the other hand, develops the same insight in the context of the discussion of the causal contribution of the four Aristotelian *per se* causes (matter, form, efficient and final).\(^{76}\) By analyzing the causal contribution of these causes, he reaches the important observation that causes are related not only to their effects but also to other causes. Because this observation is drawn from his analysis of *per se* causes (and not accidental ones), he can apply this point to further understand the role of potencies or principles in principiation; indeed, potencies or powers are essential for what they principiate in the same way as the four Aristotelian causes are *per se* causes of their effect. But let us see how Scotus reaches this observation.

Form and matter are that because of which a hylomorphic compound, for example, a tree, exits.\(^{77}\) Metaphysically, form as a formal cause of a composite accounts for the way in which a

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\(^{75}\) See Scotus, *QSM* IX, qq. 3–4, n. 18 (OPh 4: 541): “Et sicut dictum est de causis, ita intelligendum est de principiis sive principiantibus sive quibus alia principiant, cuiusmodi dicuntur ‘potentiae’, ut patebit in secundo articulo.”

\(^{76}\) One issue that Scotus addresses is how such an analysis of causation pertains to metaphysics since the four Aristotelian causes pertain to physics. On how causes pertain to metaphysics, and in general about the relations between causes see Peter King, “Scotus on Metaphysics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15–68. Note that for Scotus, to be a cause and to be what is caused (or to be an effect) are conditions of being because they are ways in which a being is in relation to another being. See Scotus, *QSM* IX, qq. 3–4, n. 16 (OPh 4: 539): “Propter aliud esse’ et ‘esse propter quod aliud est’ sint condiciones entis absolutae.” To be a cause is “to be that because of which something is,” while to be that which is caused or to be an effect is “to be that which is because of another.” For example, heat is the cause of heating because heat is in relation to heating that because of which heating is, while heating is in relation to heat that which is because of heat. Once one metaphysically conceptualizes what causes and what is caused as two ways in which one being relates to another, one can inquire further in the ways in which what causes relates to what is caused by it. In natural philosophy, something relates to another as either an efficient, material, formal, or final cause. Thus, Scotus tries to show how these ways in which beings are related are also relevant for metaphysics.

\(^{77}\) On the causality of matter and form, and in general of the four Aristotelian causes, I found very useful the following works: Richard Cross, “Duns Scotus’s Anti-Reductionistic Account of Material Substance,” *Vivarium* 33 (1995): 137–70;
composite comes to exist, namely by being formed (*formatum*). Matter, on the other hand, as a material cause of a composite also accounts for the way in which a composite comes to exist, namely by being made of matter (*materiatum*). This makes matter and form intrinsic essential causes of a composite.

Matter and form are also parts of a hylomorphic composite. Matter is an essential part of the composite and is potential; form is an essential part of the composite and is actual. Form causes formally the composite by actualizing the potency of matter, while matter causes materially the composite by “enmattering” the form. From the nature of these entities, Scotus draws an important conclusion about the nature of their causality: “What is not made of matter, is not formed and vice versa” 78 Neither form alone nor matter alone can be the cause of a composite. When a form is the formal cause of a substance, it is by this also a co-cause of that substance together with matter. Thus, “anything that has one intrinsic cause will also have another, which exercises its causal influence along with the first.” 79

This discussion about how matter and form co-cause the hylomorphic composite also illuminates an aspect of these causes, namely, that matter and form each enter into two kinds of relationships. 80 First, like any cause, they are essentially related to what they cause: the material cause to what is made of matter, the formal cause to what is made of form. Second, they are related to each other as co-causes of a composite. Matter insofar as it is able to be actualized is related to form as that which can actualize it. One might think that the actualization of matter by form is the same as the composite being informed by a form. However, they are different. For Scotus, matter has its own

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78 See John Duns Scotus, *A Treatise on God as First Principle*, trans. Allan B. Wolter (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), 2.23, 22–25: “Quod non est materiatum, non est formatum, et e converso. […] Quod igitur non habet partem per se potentiale non est compositum; igitur nec formatum, quia formatum est compositum habens formam partem sui. […] Si quid tantum habet partem unam essentialem, non est nisi illa, imo illa non est pars, nec causa, propter primam dictam; ergo omne causatum ex aliqua causa intrinsecam habet etiam aliam intrinsecam concausantem, et ita patet propositum.”

79 Ibid., 2.25, 24. But there are forms (angelic forms) which do not actualize matter, so are these forms formal causes of the substance of angels? The answer is no: angelic forms are not the formal causes of the substance of angels.

80 See Scotus, *QDM* VIII, q. 4, n. 44 (OPh 4: 503–504): “Item, sicut materia dicitur primo ad materiatum, et e converso, ut pars talis ad tale totum, ita materia ut informabilis videtur primo dici ad formam ut informantem, et e converso. Et ita in duabus essentiis absolutis materiae et formae fundantur quattuor relationes habentes propria correlativa: duae scilicet mutuae, et duae ad compositum. Ergo quaelibet habet proprium correlativum, et non tantum per se.” Note that this is in fact a problem raised against Scotus. However, Scotus concedes the conclusion of the argument.
being or, as he says, matter is a positive entity, although it is one that needs to be actualized. Because matter has its own being, when it is actualized by form, the form remains outside of the being of matter. This is different from when the form informs the composite, of which it remains as an essential part. When they are related as co-causes, matter and form are responsible for each other’s causality: matter makes form a co-cause, while form makes matter of a co-cause. The two kinds of relations (to their own causatum and to each other) are different because they have different relata. According to the first relation, form and matter are related to what they cause—what is made of form and what is made of matter—and it is at this moment that they are called material and formal cause. According to the second, they are related to each other; note that in this relation, matter and form are not material and formal causes of each other.

Matter and form are not only related to each other as co-causes, but they are also related to other co-causes such as the efficient and the final. Why is there a need for some further co-causes of the hylomorphic composite? Or, to put it differently, why are matter and form not sufficient as co-causes of the composite? On the one hand, matter and form cannot cause the hylomorphic composite because this kind of composite, being something one per se, is a new entity distinct from its parts (matter and form) and thus more than their sum. On the other hand, if the composite were nothing other than the sum of its parts, then its parts (matter and form) could not be said to be causes of the

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81 See Scotus, *Lect.* II, d. 12, q. un., n. 76 (Vat. 19: 99): “Materia nec est actus nec compositum proprie loquendo (sive actus dicatur ab ‘agere’, sive ex hoc quod actu aliiq), sed est medium et entitas positiva quae est in potentia ut perficiatur alia entitate; unde concedo quod materia est entitas simplex, sed non pura potentia.”

82 See Scotus, *Theoremata* 11.2–3 (OPh 2: 683): “For ma est forma materiae vel actus, non causa formalis, quia nec pars compositi est forma et causa formalis. […] Si concedatur oppositum conclusionis, tunc forma est causa duorum causatorum: et informati extra quod est essentialiter, et informati cuius essentiae est aliquid.”

83 One might wonder why matter and form make one per se. Scotus’s answer is that there is no deeper reason than that these two entities are the kind of causes that do that: matter and form are potential and actual. See Scotus, *Theoremata* 9, concl. 17, n. 20 (OPh 2: 676): “Quae causa educendi unum ex materia et forma? Hoc quidem potentia, illud vero actu.” See also *Lect.* II, d. 12, q. un, n. 50 (Vat. 19: 89): “Compositum ex materia et forma est unum quia ‘hoc actu et illud potentia’, sicut ibi dicit Philosophus; quia enim non est medium inter materiam et ‘ipsam esse causam’ in genere suo, nec inter formam et ‘ipsam esse causam’ in genere suo, ideo per se faciunt unum.” In *Lect.* II, d. 12, q. un, nn. 59–68, Scotus explains more the sense of “hoc potentia, illa actu,” however, he does not give any other reason why matter and form make one per se besides being the kind of items that do that.

84 See Scotus, *Lect.* II, d. 12, q. un., n. 68 (Vat. 19: 95): “Sicut igitur ens simplex se toto est ens et unum, ita ens compositum ex principiis essentialibus (cuiusmodi sunt materia et forma, quae sola nata sunt aliquid ens per se substituire) est per se unum, et hoc est aliqua unitate alterius rationis ab unitate simplicitatis: sic ab ista entitate alia est entitas.” See also Scotus *QSM* VIII, q. 4, n. 41 (OPh 4: 501): “Entitas compositi est aliqua entitas tertia ab entitate materiae et formae, et causata ab eis.”
composite, for there would be nothing new to be caused.\textsuperscript{85} Thus, matter and form are not sufficient as co-causes because they are also parts of what they cause. Scotus explains that they can only be partial causes of the composite and that some other causes need to be introduced to account for the causation of the composite. Since adding another intrinsic cause will not solve the conundrum (it will still be a part), the causes to be introduced must be extrinsic and essential. (The new causes to be introduced cannot be accidental because they would not be reliable enough to always produce the composite.) Thus, since intrinsic causes by themselves cannot cause the hylomorphic composite, they need the concurrence of extrinsic causes.\textsuperscript{86}

These extrinsic causes are the final and the efficient cause. Metaphysically, the account of final cause is explained as that good because of which something is. What is caused by the final cause is what has an end or is ordered to an end (finitum), not in the sense that a final cause brings or gives being to what is ordered to an end, but in the sense that it is the cause of why what is brought about is ordered to an end. It is the role of the efficient cause to bring about what is so ordered to an end. Thus, if something is finitum, that is, if it is what is ordered to an end, it must also be an effectum, or what is caused by an efficient cause.\textsuperscript{87} But it is not only the final cause that requires an efficient cause as a co-cause; the efficient cause also cannot cause an effect without having a final cause as a co-cause, for no efficient cause acts without an end.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{85} See Scotus, \textit{Lect.} III, d. 2, q. 2, n.83 (Vat. 20: 103): “Item, si non esset alia entitas totius quam est entitas partium, non esset compositum causatum, quia partes non sunt causatae ex causis intrinsecis; si igitur compositum nihil alium esset quam partes, sequeretur quod compositum non esset causatum ex causis intrinsecis, quia tunc essent nonnisi illa duo entia quae sunt cause.” There is another reason why matter and form are parts distinct from the \textit{per se} one whole. For example, if a hylomorphic composite were just the sum of its essential parts, matter and form, then there would be no difference between a substance and an aggregate. An aggregate is just the sum of all its parts; for example, a heap is just the sum of some stones. See Scotus, \textit{Lect.} III, d. 2, q. 2, n. 80 (Vat. 20: 102–103): “Quod autem entitas totius sit alia ab entitate partium materiae et formae, ita quod sit tertia entitas, ostenditur, quia aliter non esset differentia inter unita quae constituunt unum per se et inter unita quae constituant unum per aggregacionem, - quod est contra Philosophum VIII Metaphysicam, ubi vult quod illud quod est unum sicut cumulus, nihil alium est quam partes; et ideo si in numero non sit aliqua forma, tunc numerus erit unus sicut acervus. In uno vero per accidens, sicut est homo albus est aliqua entitas totius quae non est alterius partis: si enim ‘albedo’ et ‘homo’ essent seorsum, non facerent totum unum, nec tunc esset homo ‘albus’; et ideo entitas illius est tertia ab entitate unius vel amborum. Sic multo fortius in toto composito quod est ‘unum per se’, quae nec est entitas unius partis, nec alterius nec etiam entitas partium, sed est tertia ab illis.”

\textsuperscript{86} See Scotus, \textit{De primo principio} 2.26, 25: “Quod non est causatum a causis extrinsecis, non est causatum ex intrinsecis.”

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 2.14–15, 19.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 2.9–10, 17.
How do these extrinsic causes contribute together with the intrinsic causes? Briefly, extrinsic causes account for the items that can play the role of intrinsic causes becoming actual causes. This view can be gathered from what Scotus says about the role of efficient causes:

[Text 7] […] The efficient cause effects the form in matter. […] What effects brings something to be. […] Since matter as such is in contradictory potency to form, it does not actually form itself, but requires something else to reduce this potency to act. And this is what effects the composite [of matter and form], for to make the composite and to make the matter be in act by the form are one and the same thing. The first consequence is clear, for no passive or contradictory potency actualizes itself. And if you say that the form actuates this potency, this is true, but it does so as a formal cause. But since matter and form must be regarded as separate [before this actuation takes place], then that which unites them has the character of an efficient cause.

[Text 7] explains the causal contribution of the efficient cause: this cause effects a form in matter. In doing this, however, the efficient cause also causes the composite of matter and form. The same idea appears in QSM VIII, q. 4. where Scotus explains that once matter and form concur or are adequately present to each other, they cause the composite; but they are adequately present to each other because of the efficient cause, that is, at the moment when they are fit to be the causes of the composite. But in what conditions are matter and form fit to be the causes of the composite? Immediately after mentioning the necessity of the concurrence of matter, form and efficient cause, Scotus says that once these causes concur, there is something in the composite besides its matter and form, namely a

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89 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 2, pars 1, qq. 1–2, n. 57 (Var. 2: 163–4): “Causae intrinsecae sunt causatae ab extrinsecis vel secundum esse earum vel in quantum causant compositum, vel utroque modo, quia causae intrinsecae non se ipsis sine agente constituunt compositum.”

90 See Scotus, De primo principio, 2.11, 16. (trans. Wolter with modifications). For the Latin text, see ibid., 2.11, 17: “efficiens effect formam in materia.”

91 Ibid., 2.16, 18 (trans. Wolter with modifications). For the Latin text, see ibid., 2.16, 19: “efficiens facit aliquid.”

92 Ibid., 2. 20, 20–22 (trans. Wolter with modifications). For the Latin text, see ibid., 2.20, 21-23: “quia materia de se est in potentia contradictioninis ad formam; igitur non est ex se actu per formam; ergo per alio reducente istam potentiam ad actum – illus est efficiens compositum, quia idem est ‘facere compositum’ et ‘materiam esse actu per formam.’ Prima consequentia patet, quia potentia mere passiva et contradictionis non se reducit ad actum. Et si dicas formam reducere ipsam potentiam ad actum, verum est formaliter, sed cum praeintelligentur forma et materia non unita, illud a quo uniuntur habet rationem causae efficientis.”

93 See Scotus, QSM VIII, q. 4, n. 32 (OPh 4: 498–99): “Itaque sola relatione alia et alia causarum ad invicem, quae tamen non est eis nec alicui earum ratio causandi, causae quandoque causant quandoque non. Ita hic de duabus causis specialiter, scilicet materia et forma, quia unita, hoc est concurrentia ad causandum, causant (qui concursus fit eorum per actionem agentis); non concurrentia, non causant.”
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relation. Thus, the causal contribution of the efficient cause is to bring about form in matter, which is the same as making matter and form concur; once matter and form are adequately present to each other, a new relation comes to be.\textsuperscript{94} It is this relation that ultimately shows matter and form being fit to become causes of the composite. However, note that what the efficient cause causes, its \textit{effectum}, is not primarily the composite, but the bringing about of the form in matter: the cause of the composite are all the causes working together—the composite is the effect of all causes working together. Indeed, in \textit{Theoremata}, Scotus says:

[\textbf{Text 8}] A cause is not said \textit{per se} to its effect but to what it causes, the efficient to what it effects, the material to what is made of matter, the formal to what has a form, the final to what has an aim.\textsuperscript{95}

In fact, if the \textit{effectum} of the efficient cause were primarily the composite, there would be no need for the other causes because the efficient cause would be sufficient for bringing it about.

We can be more specific about the nature of this relation that arises in the presence of form, matter and the efficient cause. Recall that there are two kinds of relation between matter and form: one relation to their effects (that is, to what is made out of matter and to what is formed) and another relation to each other as co-causes of the composite. The efficient cause is not responsible for the first kind of relation, because, as [\textbf{Text 8}] shows, the relation of matter to what is made out of matter and the relation of the form to what is made of form are essential relations. Because they are essential relations, these relations are founded on the \textit{relata} alone. In another place in the \textit{Theoremata}, Scotus even says that the relation of a cause to what it causes or its effect is a transcendental relation.\textsuperscript{96} Transcendental relations arise immediately as their foundation is posited because the foundation cannot exist without the relation. The reason why the foundation cannot exist without the relation is that the foundation cannot exist without the \textit{terminus} of the relation. Thus, once the foundation is

\textsuperscript{94} See Scotus, \textit{QDM} VIII, q. 4, n. 33 (OPh: 499): “Igitur in composito est aliquid praeter ipsa. Si intelligatur ‘aliquid’ — id est, aliquid respectus —, quod praeter absolutam naturam utriusque est in composito (non est causa intrinseca nec ratio causae, ac per hoc ut pars essentialis compositi, sed ut concomitans partem et causam sine qua non causa non causaret), non potest negari consequentiam.”

\textsuperscript{95} See Scotus, \textit{Theoremata} 8, concl. 4, n. 14 (OPh 2: 663): “Causa non dicitur per se ad effectum, sed ad causatum; efficiens vero ad effectum sicut materia ad materiatum et forma ad formatum et finis ad finitum.”

\textsuperscript{96} See Scotus, \textit{Theoremata} 8, concl. 6, n. 18 (OPh 2: 664): “Relationes causae et causati sunt transcendentes. Probatur quia non fundatur super rem determinati generis. Ideo non reducuntur ad aliquem modum, V \textit{Metaphysicae}. Praecedetne relatio cause ipsam causationem fundatam super essentiam nude quae causaret?”
posited, a relation arises to something without which the foundation cannot exist.\footnote{See Scotus, \textit{Ord.} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 57 (Vat. 9: 26-27): “Uno modo quod fundamentum non potest poni sine relatione illa absque contradictione, quia fundamentum non potest absque contradictione esse sine termino illius relationis; nec etiam sine relatione ad terminum quia illa relatio necessario requirit talem terminum ad sui ‘esse’. Tales sunt relationes creaturarum – in quantum creatura – ad Deum in quantum creator. Huiusmodi relatio est idem realiter fundamento.” For a detailed analysis of this kind of relation see Mark Henninger, \textit{Relations: Medieval Theories 1250-1325} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 78–85.} An example of this kind of relation is that between a created thing and God: as soon as a created thing is posited, a relation to God must be posited. This relation is founded on the created thing not in virtue of it being a thing of a certain kind, but in virtue of it being something created. Thus, relations of this kind are called \textit{transcendental relations}, because they are not founded on things in virtue of them pertaining to any of the categories. Why are the relations between form and what is made of form, and between matter and what is made of matter, transcendental relations? These relations are not founded on their \textit{relata} insofar as these \textit{relata} pertain to a certain species or genus, but insofar as they are the kind of being they are: one is that because of which the other one is, while the second is that which is because the first one is. Thus, whatever the efficient cause might be responsible for, it cannot be responsible for the transcendental relation between matter, form, and what they cause, for once something is posited as a cause, what it causes and the relation to what it causes must be posited too; there is no need for the contribution of an efficient cause.

The only remaining relation for which an efficient cause is responsible is the second kind of relation, namely the mutual relation between matter and form as co-causes of the composite. In what sense is the efficient cause responsible for the relation of co-causality between matter and form? To answer this question, we need to look in more detail into the nature of this relation of co-causality. In \textit{Ord.} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, Scotus distinguishes transcendental relations from two other kinds of relations. One kind is such that it arises only when both the foundation and the \textit{terminus} of the relation are posited. This kind of relation is different from the previous one because in the second case, the foundation does not necessitate the existence of the \textit{terminus} as in the first kind. An example of the second kind of relation is the relation of similitude between two white things. One white thing can exist without another white thing existing; however, as soon as another white thing exists, a relation of similitude between the two arises.\footnote{See \textit{Ord.} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 58 (Vat. 9: 27): “Alio modo, fundamentum potest esse sine relatione, quia potest esse sine termino; tamen ipso posito et termino, necessario consequitur illa relatione, ita quod illa duo—simul posita—sunt necessaria causa relationis, sive in altero extre mo sive in utroque. Exemplum de similitudine in albo et albo.”} Is the relation of being co-causes between matter and form of the second kind? If they were, then it would follow that as soon as matter and form are posited, they...
become related as two co-causes of the composite. But Scotus says that this is not what happens for an efficient and a final cause are needed.

If this is correct, then the relation of being co-causes falls under the last kind of relation that Scotus explains in *Ord. III*, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1. These relations are such that they do not necessarily arise when their foundations and their *termini* are posited. The difference between this kind of relation and the previous ones is that while for the previous ones the existence of the *relata* is necessary and sufficient for the relation to arise, for the last kind of relation the existence of the *relata* is necessary but not sufficient. In fact, relations of the last kind arise contingently, that is, they are contingent on the presence of a further item.  

As an example, Scotus mentions the relation between matter and form. Matter and form are absolute beings that can exist without any union between them. But they get united, that is, they become co-causes, when an efficient cause effects the form in matter, that is, when it makes matter concur with form. At this moment, matter is actualized by the form. Thus, if this is correct, the relation between form and matter as co-causes of the composite arises when an efficient cause makes form and matter concur.

All causes (material, formal, efficient, and final) have a transcendental relation to what they cause and another contingent relation to each other as co-causes that are required to bring about something. Note, however, that none of the causes is responsible for the manner in which a cause causes something. For example, the efficient cause is not responsible for the manner in which a form is a co-cause with matter, namely by actualizing it, but only for making form concur with matter, that is for them becoming co-causes. Thus, among all these causes, there are mutual relations that come about when all of them are adequately present to each other (in whatever way this presence is understood). Matter and form cannot alone be causes of the composite, but the same must also be said about efficient and final causes.

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99 See *Ord. III*, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 59 (Vat. 9: 27): “Tertio modo, relatio potest non necessario consequi fundamentum, quia illud non necessario coexigit terminum nec habitudinem illam ad terminum; nec etiam fundamentum et termino positis, necessario consequitur relatio ad ambo extrema vel unum, sed contingenter dictur advenire extremo, etiam postquam quodlibet absolutum in ipso et in termino fuerit positis in esse. Et in isto modo non oportet ponere aliquod absolutum novum in altero extremorum, etiam dato quod relatio sit nova. Hoc modo se habent multae relationes, puta communiter uniones absoluti ad absolutum: si enim forma per se esset et materia per se esset (ut corpus organicum separatum et anima separatata), vel si subiectum per se esset et accidens per se (ut panis et quantitas).” On this kind of relation see Cross, *The Physics of Duns Scotus*, 112–15. See also Adams, *William Ockham* vol. I, 217.

100 See Scotus, *QSM* VIII, q. 4, n. 14 (OPh 4: 493): “Quia materia et forma, si intelligitur non unita, non est contradictio quod utrumque intelligatur in se esse, et compositum non erit.”
To summarize, the observation that Scotus reaches in his analysis of causes is that all causes have two kinds of relations, one to what they cause and another to another cause (or causes) together with which they cause. These two relations are of different kinds: one is a transcendental relation, the other is a contingent one.

### 3.2.3. Potency as Principle and the Relation between Principles

As causes have two kinds of relations, namely to what they cause and to other causes together with which they cause something, potencies and principles have two kinds of relations, one to what they principiate, another to other principles or potencies together with which they principiate something:

> [Text 9] A principle not only bears a relationship to its *principiatum*, and this sort of principle is related to this sort of *principiatum*, —for example, what is efficient to what it effects, and matter to what is composed of matter, —but one principle also relates to another principle. For whether they be extrinsic or intrinsic, this principle and that principle never cause together unless they are in some way themselves connected and function concurrently, for no single cause suffices for causing something that essentially depends upon many causes.  

In this subsection, I will focus on these two kinds of relation, but to get to them we first need to revisit the issue of the identification of potencies with principles and causes.

One can raise the following objection: the term ‘potency’ does not seem to apply in all cases in which the terms ‘cause’ and ‘principle’ do; for example, it is not clear in what sense a final or a formal cause is a potency.  

But if the term ‘potency’ does not apply to all cases in which the term ‘cause’ does, then it is not clear how potencies are similar to principles and causes, and so there is no reason to think that potencies have two relations, as causes do. In reply to this objection, Scotus recognizes that the term ‘potency’ is not applied to all kinds of causes, or at least, it was the intention...

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of Aristotle to understand potency as principle in relation to only two causes, namely the efficient and the material cause. Only these two causes are called principles by him. But even if the term ‘principle’ is restricted to these two cases, there are reasons to think that a principle has the same relations as a cause has. Indeed, the causal contribution of material and efficient causes is understood in terms of active and passive principles. An active principle is “that by which an efficient cause can cause efficiently,” while a passive principle is “that by which from something something can be made.” It is to these two kinds of principles, active and passive, that potency, insofar as it signifies a principle, primarily applies. Because potency applies to active and passive principles, in the end it also applies to the efficient and material causes. Thus, potencies can preserve the two relations that are involved in the notion of cause.

Let us look in more detail at the relations that active and passive principles or potencies have. An active principle or a potency has two kinds of relation. It has a relation to another principle or potency together with which it principiates something. For example, the potency for causing heat has to be related to a passive potency for becoming hot for something to be principiated. The terminus of this relation is a principle that can be actuated, that is, a principle that can together with the active

103 See Scotus, QISM IX, qqs. 3–4, n. 24 (OPh 4: 544–45): “Si quis velit primam viam tenere et per dissuetudinem, excusatur; non oportet laborare ad contra arguendum. Secunda via videtur de intentione Philosophi qui de ipsa potentia non loquitur in quantum est principium nisi ut pertinet ad duplex genus causae.”

104 See Scotus, QISM IX, qqs. 3–4, n. 23 (OPh 4: 544): “Et ideo forte, ut ‘potentia’ significat principium, non est impositum generaliter omni principio sive causae, sed tantum principio activo quod est quo efficiens potest efficere, et principio passivo quod est quo ex aliquo potest fieri aliquid.”

105 This discussion also suggests that the distinction between active and passive principles is derived from thinking about cases in which efficient and material causes occur. Active and passive principles are not mentioned at all when Scotus discusses the per se signification of potency (namely the relation to what is principiated). Consider a father begetting a son (in this case, there is a principle, the father, and what is principiated, the son). Thinking only about this relation, one does not get that there must also be something else that together with the father produced the son. But many cases of causation (usually cases of generation) are such that one has to consider the causal contribution of another principle. In these cases, one cannot make sense of causal interaction without considering the contribution of a second principle. For example, when a fire makes something hot, there must be something to be made hot. In these cases, one considers not only the cause that brings about a property, but also another cause that receives the property. But note that even in these cases, one might not be entirely warranted to think that the principles involved in the causal interaction are active and passive. One can think that there are two or more principles mutually working together to produce something, but it is not clear that these principles need to be classified as active and passive. For a view that also posits that powers are mutually related in causation see the works of C.B. Martin and John Heil, especially John Heil and C.B. Martin, “Rules and Powers,” Philosophical Perspectives 12, no. S12 (1998): 283–312; C.B. Martin, The Mind in Nature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 54–79; John Heil, From an Ontological Point of View (Oxford University Press, 2003), 117–34.

principle, principiate something. Such a principle is passive.\textsuperscript{107} An active principle has a second relation, namely to that which it actively principiates \textit{together} with the passive principle, a relation that is like the one that a cause has to what it causes (for example, the efficient cause to what it effects). But what exactly is the \textit{principiatum} of a principle? Take for example heat as an active principle: is the \textit{principiatum} a new form, namely heat produced in something, or is it something having being made hot, as Henry of Ghent maintains?

Based on [\textbf{Text 9}], my suggestion is that the \textit{principiatum} of heat is heat alone. In that text, Scotus says that a principle is related to its \textit{principiatum} as the efficient cause is to what it effects. But [\textbf{Text 7}] shows that an efficient cause effects a form in matter. By causing a form in matter, it brings matter and form to concur, and together they co-cause the composite. Similarly, an active principle’s \textit{principiatum} is what the principle brings about (heat in our example). Moreover, the other view, namely that the \textit{principiatum} is something informed by a form, does not seem to be supported by Scotus’s claim that from the principle insofar as it is something absolute “without any prior determining relationship […] an absolute effect proceeds.”\textsuperscript{108} If the \textit{principiatum} is something informed by heat, then the \textit{principiatum} is not an absolute effect: it is something informed by a form, that is, something composed of a form and something else having the role of a receiving principle.\textsuperscript{109}

A passive principle has three kinds of relation,\textsuperscript{110} just as a material cause has three kinds of relation. A passive principle is related to what it passively principiates. For example, a principle of becoming hot is related to heat passively, that is, insofar as it receives it. Again, similar to an active principle, a passive principle is related to another principle, insofar as this other principle can be a partner together with which it principiates something. For example, the passive principle of becoming hot is related to the active principle of causing heat, so that through their mutual manifestation, heat is principiated. But what exactly is the contribution of the passive principle? Scotus says that for

\textsuperscript{107} Why is that an active principle is not related to a form or to another active principle? One might think that Scotus needs to allow for such cases because he agrees that multiple efficient causes can co-cause something if they are essentially ordered. However, even multiple efficient co-causes need to be actuated to cause something.

\textsuperscript{108} See Scotus, \textit{QSM IX}, q. 5, n. 13 (OPh 4: 563): “Sed ab absoluto, sine omni respectu praeecedente, est effectus absolutus.”

\textsuperscript{109} This conclusion needs to be qualified. In a case of generation, the \textit{principiatum} might be the composite of matter and form, and not form alone. Such a composite would be an absolute effect.

\textsuperscript{110} See Scotus, \textit{QSM IX}, qq. 3–4, n. 29 (OPh 4: 548): “Hoc intelligendo passivam triplicemaequivocam: silicet ut dicit relationem primo ad principiatum passive; et secundo ad principium activum, non in quantum est activum acti, sed in quantum actutivum actuabilis, quia sic e converso referetur principium activum ad passivum; et tertio ad principium actuale, quod secum constituit compositum, faciendo unum cum ipso.”
principiating something, both active and passive principles need to actuate each other: the active principle needs to actuate the passive one; the passive principle needs to be actuated by the active one. This can be explained by saying that the active principle brings about the form, heat in our example, but for heat to be brought about, a passive principle need to be present to receive it. Thus, actuation refers to what happens when active and passive principles are finally paired with each other or manifest each other. Note that it is not simply the presence of a passive principle that accounts for the actuation of the active principle—it is the ability of the passive principle to receive the form that the active principle can cause that accounts for the principiation of heat together with the active principle. More precisely, it is this ability to receive heat that is actuated when a principle for causing heat is present. This is why, according to this second relation, the principle to which a passive principle is related cannot be anything other than active, for two passive principles alone can neither actuate each other nor principiate anything.

Last but not least, in contrast to an active principle, a passive principle is also related to an actual principle, a form, together with which it constitutes a composite. This third relation is the relation between matter and form as intrinsic principles of a composite. While the previous two relations are about the principiation of something, this is a relation of compositionality: a passive principle is related to an actual principle, a form, and together they compose something. By mentioning this relation, Scotus probably wants to clarify where he stands in relation to Henry’s view. Recall that Henry acknowledges the working together of different supposita with distinct powers in principiating the product (a thing informed by a form). But in his view, the causal contribution of these supposita are of a distinct kind: one suppositum principiates the product by bringing it about, the other by being part of the product. Scotus probably noticed the distinction in kind, and so he intentionally separated them to show where his view differs from Henry’s.

Of course, the main question is: why does one need actuation? Why is it not sufficient that a passive principle contributes by being a part of the product? To put it differently, why is Scotus dissatisfied with Henry’s view? To answer this question, we need to see on what exactly Scotus and Henry agree. First, both recognize that in principiation, something is composed with something else, an active principle, that is, a form, and with a passive principle. Second, both recognize that the active

111 The editors of QSM suggest that the relation of co-causality is between a passive principle and an efficient cause. (See p. 548, note 44). In my opinion, this is incorrect because the discussion about causes is at another level than the discussion of principles.
and passive principles get actualized. Indeed, for Henry, the supposita as principles actuate themselves, in the sense that they make each other principles despite having distinct causal contributions: without a suppositum having a passive power to compose with an act, the product does not come about from them, and thus neither does the suppositum that originates the principiation become a principle related to a product. For example, fire does not principiate a hot thing by itself: it requires the presence of a thing that is able to become hot. The important difference between Scotus and Henry concerns the relation between actuation and composition. For Henry, for the supposita involved in principiation to become principles, that is, for fire to cause a pot to become hot, and thus, for them to actuate each other, it is not only necessary that these supposita be suitable to each other, but they also need the presence of something else, of the form, that is, of heat, which together with the passive principle composes the product, that is, the heated pot. Thus, for Henry, actuation occurs at the moment when a form combines with a passive principle to make up the principium, the heated pot. In contrast, for Scotus, actuation needs to happen before a passive principle composes with a form. Thus, Scotus thinks that in Henry’s view, by the time the supposita become principles, all the fun stuff has already happened so to speak, since the form that composes the product with the suppositum that has a passive power must have been already produced. Indeed, according to Henry, the form needs to be produced before the product (a heated pot, for example) is principiated. But Scotus might object to Henry that what needs to be explained is the bringing about of the form, for if there is no form to be combined with the suppositum with that has a suitable passive power to receive it, this suppositum cannot play its role of being the principle that is part of the product; but if this suppositum cannot be that principle, neither can be the suppositum with active power be a principle of the product, for they are constituted as principles at the same moment.\footnote{I will say more on this issue when I discuss the issue of agents and patients in Scotus’s view about self-motion.} So Scotus must be dissatisfied with Henry’s account: by focusing on the final product, the heated pot, Henry leaves unexplained the most important aspect of the interaction between the pot and the fire, namely the bringing about of the heat.

Which of the two kinds of relations—the relation to its principium and the relation to another principle together with which it principiates—is essential for something being a potency? The answer is that it is the relation to the principium that is essential. Scotus acknowledges that one and the same thing can be essentially (per se) related to two different things. He distinguishes between two ways of being essentially related. \emph{A} can be essentially and \emph{primarily} related to \emph{B}, when it is related to \emph{B} in virtue of \emph{A}'s species; while \emph{A} can be essentially and \emph{non-primarily} related to \emph{B}, when it is related to \emph{B} in virtue
of A’s genus. For example, medicine is essentially and non-primarily related to its object because its genus, science, is essentially and primarily related to an object.\textsuperscript{113} Having made these distinctions, Scotus argues that it is not possible for something to be essentially and primarily related to two specifically distinct things, for then it would need to be of two distinct species.\textsuperscript{114} However, it is possible that one thing refers essentially to two specifically distinct things, for it is possible to be related essentially and primarily to one (that is, it is possible to be related in virtue of its species to one) and essentially and non-primarily to another (that is, it is possible to be related in virtue of its genus to the other).\textsuperscript{115} Scotus applies these considerations to principles: as such, an active potency is essentially and primarily related to a passive potency, that is, active and passive potency are related to each other in virtue of being the kinds of potency they are.\textsuperscript{116} But an active principle is also related essentially but non-primarily to its act.\textsuperscript{117} For example, heat as an active principle is essentially and primarily related to a passive principle, but it is essentially and non-primarily related to the form of heat because it is related to the form of heat in virtue of being a potency or principle, not in virtue of being an active potency. Thus, a principle as a principle is related to its principiatum, but sometimes the principiatum is such that to be brought about another principle is necessary.

\textsuperscript{113} See Scotus, \textit{QSM} V, q. 14, n. 22 in John Duns Scotus, \textit{Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis, libri I-V}, ed. R. Andrews, Girard J. Etzkorn, and Gedeon Gál, Opera Philosophica 3 (St. Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute, 1997), 619–20: “Idem non potest referri ad diversa primo; potest tamen per se non primo. Quia illud competit alicui ‘primo’ quod competit ei per speciem suam; illud ‘per se’ quod competit sibi per causam in se. Unde illa dicuntur relativa primo, quae sunt huiusmodi secundum propriam rationem specifciam, sicut pater per se. Alia per se dicuntur relativa, secundum alicui intellectum in eis, sicut ratione genera sui. Sicut medicina dicitur relative ratione scientiae, quae est genus eius, quae intelligitur in eo.” Note that there is nothing unusual in this use of the term ‘primarily’—it is the same as in Aristotle’s claim that a triangle has primarily its sum of its angles equal to 180 degrees, while an isosceles triangle has essentially but not primarily the sum of its angles equal to 180 degrees.

\textsuperscript{114} See Scotus, \textit{QSM} V, q. 14, n. 23 (OPh 3: 620): “Tunc etiam idem haberet duas definitiones, quia per utrumque correlativum acque primo definitur, et tunc posset cognosci per unam et non cognosci per aliam.”

\textsuperscript{115} See Scotus, \textit{QSM} V, q. 14, n. 25 (OPh 3: 620): “Item, possibile est idem referri ad diversa non primo, quia primo et per se ad proprium correlativum, et per se et non primo ad correlativum sui generis.”

\textsuperscript{116} I interpret this claim to be a claim about the suitability of active and passive principles, and not about their actuation. More precisely, I do not think that Scotus means that active and passive principles are essentially related so that their actuation as a relation necessarily arises between them. As we will see in chapter 8, in the section on action and passion in Scotus, actuation is an extrinsically advenient relation—it arises between active and passive principle only in the presence of their principiatum, the form.

\textsuperscript{117} See Scotus, \textit{QSM} V, q. 14, n. 29 (OPh 3: 622): “Ad aliud: quod potentia activa ‘primo’ refertur ad potentiam passivam in quantum huiusmodi; ‘per se’, in quantum potentia, solum refertur et non primo ad agere. Et relativum primum, scilicet potentia passiva, non potest esse sine per se correlativo non primo, scilicet sine actu potentiae activae.”
Scotus considers the two relations that a principle has, to its *principiatum* and to another principle to be “always of different accounts.” What we know to this point is that the relation to the *principiatum* is essential for a principle to be a principle. We do not know much about the relation to another principle. We know, however, that in the case of causes the relation between matter and form as co-causes of a composite arises in the presence of an efficient cause. If the relation of actuation, that is, the relation between active and passive principles as co-principles that together princiipiate something, is similar to the relation between matter and form as co-causes, then this relation also will arise in the presence of something. In chapter 8 I will return to this special relation and explain what else is needed for two items to become active and passive principles of the same *principiatum*; however, for now that discussion will divert me too much from my aim, which is to show what Henry and Scotus take powers to be.

### 3.3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to clarify the causal contribution of causal powers in causal explanations by considering how the meanings of causes and causal powers or potencies and principles are related. Although Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus disagree on what exactly the signification of ‘potency’ is, they agree that this term should not be considered an abstract one. More importantly, they disagree on the relation between ‘potency’, ‘cause’, and ‘principle’ and their explanatory power. The main difference between their views concerns the role they assign to powers or potencies. For Henry, causation or principiation is not about powers, but about self-subsisting things, *supposita*—it is *supposita* that are the causal actors. Powers pertain only to that on account of which something acts or suffers, and this is why powers do not need to be related to each other. In contrast, for Scotus, potencies are principles, and they principiate together. However, recall that although Henry does not acknowledge the existence of mutual relations between potencies, he acknowledges that principles principiate together. The distinction between their views lies in the causal role they attribute to these principles. For Henry, an active principle principiates a product by bringing it about, while a passive principle principiates it by composing it. Scotus, on the other hand, recognizes that a passive principle has a role not only in composing something, but also in actuating an active principle so that it brings something about.

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118 See Scotus, *QSM* IX, qq. 3–4, n. 266 (OPh 4: 544): “Et istae duae relationes (scilicet relatio principii ad principium et relatio mutua princiipiorum) sunt omnino alterius rationis et possunt ambae fundari in eodem absoluto.”
Chapter 4 The Nature of Causal Powers

Both Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus agree that ‘potency’ signifies either a relation to an act or something relational in nature. They also agree that there is more to this term: the term signifies (in Henry’s view) or gives one to understand (in Scotus’s view) the foundation of this relation. These claims raise the question about what kind of entity a causal power is.

Understanding the nature of powers is relevant for the problem of self-motion. Since self-movers need to move as a whole and primarily, the powers by which they move or in virtue of which they move need to be the same as the self-movers. But for knowing whether powers are the same as the self-movers, we need to understand what kind of entities powers are.

A traditional view among defenders of Aristotle’s arguments against self-motion is that powers are accidental qualities of things. This view was maintained by many important medieval philosophers (Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, etc.). To understand Henry’s and Scotus’s views about the nature of causal powers, we need to discuss this traditional view, because not only do both engage with it, but they develop their own accounts of the nature of causal powers in contrast to it. More importantly, discussing this view allows us to see a different way of conceptualizing causal powers and to understand the intuitions behind it. In this way, it will be also easier for us to determine how much Henry and Scotus diverge from the views of their contemporaries.

This chapter has three main sections. In the first section, I discuss the view that powers are accidental qualities; in the second, I turn to Henry’s view about the nature of powers; in the last section, I discuss Scotus’s view.

4.1. Powers as Accidental Qualities

Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus ascribe causal powers to both substances and accidents. For example, both fire (a substance) and heat (a quality) have causal powers. They maintain that powers are not only accidental but also substantial, that is, that some powers are indeed accidents of a substance, but other causal powers are the same as the substance itself. For example, the causal power of heat, which is an accident, will be an accidental power of fire, while the causal power of fire to bring about its proper and inseparable accidents, among which heat must be counted, is a substantial power of fire. Other examples of substantial powers are the powers of the soul. The view that at least some
causal powers are the same as the substantial forms goes against another view that posits that in creatures, active and passive causal powers are always accidental qualities.

Why would causal powers be envisaged as accidental qualities? Discussing the category of quality in *Categories* 8 (9a14–28), Aristotle mentions powers, together with habits, among the species of quality. Probably the reason he posits powers in this category is that things having powers to cause other things to burn, purge, break, etc. are things that are qualified in a certain way. For example, a knife has the power to cut because it is sharp, a fire has the power to heat because it is hot, a stone has the power to break a glass because it is heavy, etc. Since ascriptions of causal powers refer to how things are in a certain way: they seem to refer to some of their accidents, namely to their qualities.

This explanation has an important limitation, one that Simplicius mentions in this passage from his commentary on the *Categories* of Aristotle:

[Text 1] Similarly, it is not said simply that a power is a quality, but [only] a certain power [is a quality]. Therefore if indeed there is a certain quality, this will be a power; if, however, there is a certain power, this will not be always a quality. Therefore, being insofar as it is being will have according to itself a power, but it is not in potency because of its participation in a quality, because a power is simply something else and not what a quality is.¹

This text is interesting for three reasons. First, it denies that powers fall only in the category of quality. Simplicius remarks that qualities are indeed powers, but not all powers are qualities. Secondly, and more interestingly, it suggests that power needs to be treated as a transcendental, i.e., a feature that pertains to something insofar as it has being, and not insofar as it is of a certain kind. [Text 1] clearly states that it is being insofar as it is being that is a power; it is not being insofar as it is a quality that it is a power. Third, and more relevant for my aim in this section—I will return to this text in another section—is that Simplicius points to an important worry: if any power is a quality, then some beings which do not have accidental features, such as God, would be without power. But God *is* powerful. Thus, medieval philosophers agree that there is a case in which power (and its manifestation or act or operation) is the same as an essence, namely God. In God, powers cannot be qualities of the divine

¹ See Simplicius, *Commentaire sur les Catégories d’Aristote*, traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke, ed. Adriaan Pattin and W. Stuyven (Paris: B. Nauwelaerts, 1975), 310: “Similiter autem non simpliciter potestia dicitur esse qualitas, sed quaedam potentia, quare si aliqua quidem qualitas est, potentia erit, si qua autem potestia, non semper qualitas. Et ens igitur in quantum ens secundum se potentiam habebit, sed non qualitatis participatione erit in potentia, quoniam simpliciter potestia alia quaedam erat et non quod qualitas.” In this passage Simplicius only reiterates what Plotinus already said in *Enneades* VI.1.10, where he questions Aristotle’s inclusion of powers into the category of qualities. See the footnote in Patar’s text.
But if powers are not necessarily qualities, why are creatures’ powers accidental qualities? To find an answer, let us see what Thomas Aquinas says about this issue in Summa Theologiae I, q. 77, art. 1:

[Text 2] If accident is taken in contradistinction to substance, then there can be no half-way between them since one is the negation of the other. One presupposes a subject of inherence and the other does not. And thus since a power of the soul is not its essence it has to be an accident, and in fact it belongs to the second subdivision of quality. But if we take the word ‘accident’ the way we do when we speak of the five types of predicatable, then there is something half-way between substance and accident. Substance in this case includes everything essential to a thing, but not everything non-essential comes, in this way of speaking, to be described as accidental, but solely what does not follow necessarily from the thing’s nature. For what is said to be proper to a thing is not of its essence yet follows necessarily from its essence putting it, as predicatable, midway between essence and accident and in this sense the powers of the soul can be said to be midway between substance and accident, natural properties of the soul, as it were.

In [Text 2], Aquinas explains how powers end up in the category of quality: powers pertain to a thing necessarily, because they are grounded in the nature of a thing or what is essential to it. But this also means that powers cannot be substantial or essential to that thing—they only follow from what is essential. Since they are not essential, they must be accidental, and so they are accidents—they fall in the category of quality. At the core of this reasoning, there are two claims: (1) powers are different from the essence of the thing that has the power, that is, they are outside of this essence, and so they must be accidents; and (2) given that powers are accidents, Aquinas claims that powers are in the category of quality. In what follows I will discuss how he articulates these two claims.

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2 See Thomas Aquinas, ST I, q. 25, art. 2 (Piana: 171b): “Actio Dei non est aliud ab eius potentia, sed utrumque est essentia divina, quia nec esse eius est aliud ab eius essentia.”

3 See Thomas Aquinas, ST I, q. 77, art. 1 ad. 5 in Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Min: Ia. 75-83, 93–95.

4 Recall here the discussion from the first chapter on how the propria follow from the essential features. Two points that are made in that chapter are important here: (1) because propria are derived from essential features, there is an order of priority between them; and (2) propria and essential features must be distinct. In [Text 2], Aquinas struggles with the kind of distinction between the two, for although propria are not part of the essence of something, they are nevertheless necessary features.
4.1.1. Powers as Qualities

Aquinas’s view about the powers of creatures being qualities is related to his claim that powers are principles of action. One might think that he would have reasoned as follows: if powers are accidents and principles of action, they cannot be relations for relations do not principiate anything. Thus, they must be qualities, for qualities seem to be the kind of entity that does something. But Aquinas does not need to use this reasoning to explain why powers are qualities, for, in contrast to someone like Scotus, he does not think that powers do anything—for Aquinas, powers are that through which something acts. So he can maintain that powers are relations, but he does not do so. Why? Again, one might think that the reason is that although for Aquinas powers are not agents, they are instruments. For example, he says that powers are instruments or quasi-instruments of substantial forms. Moreover, he sometimes says that powers themselves act, albeit in a restricted way as instruments of a principal agent. Thus, it might seem that for Aquinas powers do act, and this is the reason why he thinks that they are qualities: since they cannot be relations, the most obvious category in which to put powers is quality. If this explanation were correct, Aquinas, like Scotus, would have posited that powers are principles of action for they act. However, I propose that Aquinas maintains that powers are qualities for a different reason. We get to this reason by inquiring into what he means when he claims that powers act: because Aquinas has a wide understanding of ‘acting’, his claim that powers act does not warrant us to infer that he maintains that powers do indeed act as agents do.

Aquinas says the following on the meaning of the term ‘to act’:

[Text 3] A thing is said to act in three manners. First, in that of a formal cause, thus we speak of whiteness making a thing white. [...] Second, in that of an efficient cause, thus when...
house-painter whitewashes a wall. And third, in that of a final cause, thus when an end is said to effect something by moving its efficient cause.\(^7\)

So, when a power is said to act, this does not necessarily mean that a power acts as an agent, that is by causing efficiently its action: it can indeed mean that the power acts as an efficient cause, but it can also mean that it acts as a formal, or final cause. Moreover, there are texts in which Aquinas explains how a power can act as a formal cause: a power formally causes the action of the principal agent. For example, heat\(^8\) is said to be the formal cause of the action of heating,\(^9\) while fire heats by the power of heat. The view that causal powers act formally seems also to be expressed in the claim stated very concisely by Aquinas that “what the agent does effectively is what the form does formally.”\(^10\)

What exactly does it mean for a power to formally cause an action? How should we understand that what an agent does efficiently is what the form does formally? Consider a case in which a fire causes heat in a haystack; the fire itself has heat, an active quality and a power that enables fire to have a specific action, that of heating. Indeed, the form of ‘heat’ not only allows fire to cause but also accounts for what fire causes, and thus for the specific way in which fire acts; this is so because usually agents produce something similar to themselves.\(^11\) Given this, a power, being also a form, is the formal

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\(^8\) Aquinas thinks that the powers of the soul are related to the soul in the same way heat is related to fire. See Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 77, art. 1 ad 3 (Piana: 464a): “Unde sic se habet formam accidentalis activa ad formam substantialiæ agentis (ut calor ad formam ignis) sicut se habet potentia animae ad animam.”


cause of an action because it accounts for the kind of action the bearer of the power performs. But since what the agent does efficiently the form does formally, the causal contribution of powers is to be understood in the framework of formal causality, while that of the whole composite is to be understood in the framework of efficient causality.

[Text 3], combined with Aquinas’s claim that powers are not agents, gives us the following picture: there is only one proper agent, the whole thing, while the powers themselves do not act efficiently, but only formally, that is, they account for how the action of the agent is done. This also explains why powers have their own action, as Aquinas sometimes says: the whole agent acts, but because its powers account for the manner of its action, each specific action can be traced back to a power of the agent. For example, fire’s action of heating can be traced back to heat, but not that of drying.

Since the causal contribution of a power to an action is responsible for the manner in which the action is done, it makes sense to think of powers as qualities. One attributes to the whole subsistent thing the causality of something, and to active and passive qualities, that is to powers, the specific manner this causality takes. For example, when fire heats a pot, we say that in this case of alteration, the causation of heat in the pot was done by fire by heating. But heating is attributed to fire only insofar as it has heat, and not, for example, because it is also dry; that is, it is attributed to fire insofar it has a certain quality.

4.1.2. Powers as Accidents

In [Text 2], Aquinas also claims that powers are distinct from the substance or essence of a thing, and therefore are accidents of it. This claim is not motivated by the view that any power must be distinct from the substance of its bearer. Medieval philosophers agreed that powers can be the same as the essence of their bearer. As we have seen, this happens in God, in whom the powers are the same as the divine essence. It also happens in the case of a substance’s passive power to receive its first accidents (its necessary proper accidents)—this power is the same as the substance.13

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12 See Thomas Aquinas, De potentia, q. 3, art. 4, corp (ed. Pession: 46): “instrumentum efficit actionem instrumentalem non per virtutem propriae naturae, sed per virtutem moventis; sicut calor naturalis per virtutem animae generat carnem vivam, per virtutem autem propriae naturae solummodo calefacit et dissolvit.” It should be noted that Aquinas uses this example to explain a position that he does not endorse.

13 See Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodl. II, q. 4 in Godfrey of Fontaines, Les quatre premiers Quodlibets de Godofroid de Fontaines (Texte inédit), ed. M. de Wulf and Auguste Pelzer, Les Philosophes Belges 2 (Louvain: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de
The claim that the active powers of a substance are distinct from its essence is motivated by the concern to distinguish between the powers of God and of creatures. Writing on the nature of the powers of the soul, Francisco Suárez expresses the worry concisely:

[Text 4] To the contrary: [...] to be able to immediately cause all its activities through its substance seems to be repugnant to the limitation and imperfection of a creature.14

God has power through nothing else than Himself; thus, His power is the same as His essence. Creatures do not have power in this way, so in them the power is different from their essence or substance, and thus an accident of it.

We know that some medieval philosophers maintained the view that powers are accidents; we also know what motivated them to maintain this view; but we do not know what arguments they had for this view. In what follows I will focus on only one argument of Aquinas15 that shows that if the power is the same as the substance, this blurs the distinction between creature and creator.

In *Summa Theologiae*, q. 79, art. 1, Aquinas provides a reason why powers are distinct from the essence of a substance:

[Text 5] A thing’s essence can be the immediate source of its activity only when its activity is its being. For as any power is related to its activity as to its actuation, so is essence related to being. Now in God alone is understanding the same as being. In creatures with intelligence, the understanding is a power of the one that understands.16

Powers are outside the essence of a thing when their operation is outside the being of that thing. However, when an operation is the same as the being of something, then the power for that operation

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14 See Franciscus Suárez, *CDA* 2.1.1, 572: “In contrarium est quia videtur repugnare limitationi atque imperfectioni creaturae universa per suam substantiam immediate operari.”

15 Focusing on only one argument seems unfair, because Aquinas and usually people following him offer many arguments in favour of the claim that powers are distinct from the essence of a substance. However, my aim here is not to defend this view; it is to understand it and use it to illuminate Henry’s and Scotus’s own views about powers.

16 See Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 79, art. 1 in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Man: Ia. 75-83*, 147. (with modifications)
or act is the same as the essence of that entity. This happens only in God, while the powers of created beings cannot be the same as their essence.

Usually this argument is understood in relation to *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 54, art. 3. There Aquinas talks about the power of angels being distinct from their being. Following Thomas Vio de Cajetan, scholars understand that argument, and by connection the one in [Text 5], as being about different acts requiring different potencies. Both being and operation are acts, but of different kinds. However, a diversity in acts shows a diversity in potencies. Thus, while essence is in potency to being, because being is what actualizes essence, a power is in potency to an operation. Since an operation is different from the act of being, the power must be different from the essence. Although this might be a plausible interpretation of the argument of *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 54, art. 3, in my view, it does not fit [Text 5] for the simple reason that in the latter there is no reference to distinct acts and distinct powers. Thus, in what follows I will offer another interpretation of [Text 5]. I will start with a discussion of the relation between being and operation.

In *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 54, art. 2, Aquinas argues for the claim that no created thing’s action is its being. He starts with the distinction between two kinds of actions, transeunt actions, that is actions that pass into another thing, and immanent actions, actions that remain in the agent. In transeunt actions, for example, in the case of a fire burning a haystack, the action (burning) is not the being of the agent (fire), for the action happens in the patient (the haystack). But neither is an immanent action such as understanding or willing the being of a human, for example. Aquinas argues that an operation, according to its account, is infinite in scope (for example, any being can fall under the scope of an act of understanding or willing, that is any being can be understood or desired). But

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19 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 54, art. 2, corp. (Piana: 334a): “Respondeo dicendum quod actio angeli non est eius esse, neque actio alieius creaturae. Duplex enim est actionis genus, ut dictur IX Metaphys. Una scilicet actio est quae transit in aliquid exterius, inferens ei passionem, sicut urere et secare. Alia vero actio est quae non transit in rem exteriorem, sed manet in ipso agente, sicut sentire, intelligere et velle, per huiusmodi enim actionem non immutatur aliquid extrinsecum, sed totum in ipso agente agitur. De prima ergo actione manifestum est quod non posset esse ipsum esse agentis, nam esse agentis significatur intra ipsum, actio autem talis est effluxus in actuam ab agente.”
the being of creatures is always finite, limited to a species or a genus, so creatures will never be able to exhaust the scope of an operation. For example, human beings cannot have an infinite operation of understanding, one that comprises everything that can be understood—one obvious reason why this is the case is that their understanding is dependent on sensorial input, which is always limited to a certain space and time. Thus, Aquinas concludes, an operation is not the being of a thing, when that being is limited to a species or genus.\(^{20}\) The argument seems unconvincing. While one might agree that any being with a limited existence is not capable of attaining the whole perfection which is possible for its operation, it is not clear why from this it follows that an instance of an operation is not the same as the being of certain limited thing. Why does Aquinas think that this not the case?

The claim that operation is not the being of a created thing needs to be understood against the background of another claim, namely that “an unreceived act is unlimited.”\(^{21}\) Briefly, the intuition behind the latter claim is that anything that is limited requires an explanation for its limitation; something that is perfect does not.\(^{22}\) An act, according to its account, is a perfection, and thus it should be unlimited. For example, the operation of heat, if heat were to exist by itself, without any material defect, would be perfect: this means that it would extend to anything that can be heated. This does not mean that the operation of heat is perfect in all respects—heat can only heat, and not, for example, colour; it is perfect because it will heat anything that can be heated at the same time.\(^{23}\)

20 Ibid.: “Secunda autem actio de sui ratione habet infinitatem, vel simpliciter, vel secundum quid. Simpliciter quidem, sicut intelligere, cuius objectum est verum, et velle, cuius objectum est bonum, quorum utrumque convertitur cum ente; et ita intelligere et velle, quantum est de se, habet se ad omnia; et utrumque recipit speciem ab objecto. Secundum quid autem infinitum est sentire, quod se habet ad omnia sensibilis, sicut visus ad omnia visibilia. Esse autem cuiuslibet creaturae est determinant ad unum secundum genus et speciem. […] Unde solum esse divinum est suum intelligere et suum velle.”

21 On this claim and the related one that “an act is not limited except by a distinct potency that receives it,” see John F. Wippel, “Thomas Aquinas and the Axiom That Unreceived Act Is Unlimited,” \textit{Review of Metaphysics} 51, no. 3 (1998): 533–64; Jean-Dominique Robert, “Le principe: ‘Actus non limitatur nisi per potentiam subjectivam realiter distinctam,’” \textit{Revue philosophique de Louvain} 47, no. 13 (1949): 44–70; W. Norris Clarke, “The Limitation of Act by Potency,” \textit{New Scholasticism} 26, no. 2 (1952): 167–94. In Wippel’s and Clarke’s articles, there is no reference to the application of this principle to operations. In a short footnote, Robert envisages the possibility that ‘act’ in these two claims can be thought in relation to ‘operation’ too. He recognizes that it is difficult to find Aquinas discussing the claim about act being limited by potency in relation to operations. He refers to one place in which this happens, namely in the discussion about angels from \textit{ST} I, q. 54. See Robert, “Le principe: ‘Actus non limitatur nisi per potentiam subjectivam realiter distinctam,’” 58, note 56.


23 See Aquinas, \textit{De malo}, q. 16, art. 9, ad 5 (Leonine ed. 23: 325): “Ad quintum dicendum, quod forma separata, quae est purus actus, scilicet Deus, non determinatur ad aliquam speciem vel genus aliquod; sed incircumscripte habet totam virtutem essendi, utpote ipsum suum esse existens, sicut patet per Dionysium cap. V de Divin. Nomin. Et ideo eius virtutis subiectur omnis actio: sed aliae formae separatae habent determinatam naturam speciei; unde non potest quaelibet quaelibet operari, sed unaquaque id quod competit suae naturae, absque aliquo impedimento materials defectus; sicut si
explanation fits with what Aquinas says in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 54, art. 2: since, according to their account, operations are perfections, they have an infinite scope.

But how are these claims about acts relevant for potencies? Aquinas suggests a connection in the following passage:

[Text 6] It must be said that the active power of anything must be assessed according to its essence, so that something acts insofar as it is a being in act. For if in something a certain form or nature not limited and not contracted were to be found, its power would be extended to all acts and effects that are fitting for that nature; for example, if heat were understood as subsisting *per se*, or in some subject that receives it according to all its power, it would follow that it would have the power to produce all acts and effects of heat. On the other hand, if a subject did not receive heat according to all its power, but with a certain contraction and limitation, it would not have an active power with respect to all acts and effects of heat.²⁴

If heat were to exist by itself, not received in anything and not limited by anything, it would be able to bring about all the actions and effects that are suitable for such a form. That is, its power would match its essence.²⁵ Of course, heat, if it were to exist in this way, would still be a limited form, but it would be perfect insofar as its power and operation are concerned. Even if heat existed in a subject, if that subject could receive all the effects and actions, the power and operation of heat (or the heat having subject) would extend to all the effects that are suitable for heat. But this is a counterfactual situation, for heat is received in something, in a subject. Once heat is received in a subject, this power is contracted and limited, extending only to certain objects, because of the subject in which heat inheres and which limits the being of heat. This is why Aquinas does not talk any more about the power of heat alone, but about the power of the subject in which heat is received. Note, however, that this

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²⁴ See Aquinas, *Quodl. III*, q. 1, art. 1, corp. in Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de quolibet: Quodlibet I, II, III, VI, IV, V, XII*, vol. 2, Opera omnia jussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita 25 (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1996), 241.: “Dicendum, quod uniuscuiusque rei virtus activa est aestimanda secundum modum essentiae, eo quod unumquodque agit in quantum est ens actu. Unde si in aliquo inventiur forma aliqua vel natura non limitata seu contracta, erit virtus eius se extendens ad omnem actus vel effectus convenientes illi naturae; puta, si intelligeretur esse calor per se substantia, vel in aliquo subjecto quod recipiet ipsum secundum totum eius posse, sequeretur quod haberet virtutem ad producendum omnes actus et effectus caloris. Si vero aliquo subjectum non recipiet calorem secundum eius totum posse, sed cum aliqua contractione et limitatione, non haberet virtutem activam respectu omnium actuum vel effectuum caloris.”

power of the subject is neither the essence of the subject nor the essence of the heat. It is not the same as the essence of heat, because heat, in virtue of its essence, has a power infinite in scope. It is not the same as the essence of the subject, because the power is not the same the subject: to have the power to heat, the subject needs to have heat—the subject does not have the power to heat before it has heat.

This interpretation illuminates what Aquinas says in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 54, art. 2 and in [Text 5]. When he says that operations have an infinite scope, he refers to the operations of angels and human beings according to their essence, without taking into consideration the limited way in which these essences exist. But then he notices that these beings are composite of essence and being, that is they have a limited mode of being. Thus, he concludes, the powers of these composites of essence and being are not the same as their essences. Probably he thinks in the following way: either once a composite of essence and limited act of being exists, a form (the power) emerges that is dependent on both—this case explains the powers of an immaterial composite such an angel or a human being; or once a composite of essence and being is informed by an accident, a form emerges that is grounded in both the composite and the accident’s essence—this case explains the powers of material composites.

In short, Aquinas’s point is that the way something exists explains the limitations of a thing’s powers and operations. Taking into account its essence alone, a thing’s powers and operations match perfectly its essence. But created things have limited acts of existence. It is this limited act of existence that explains their limited powers and operations, and, in the end, why the powers and operations of created beings do not match their essence or are outside it. Only in God does His infinite act of existence not limit His powers (and operations), and therefore, in Him alone, the powers (and operations) are His essence.

Concerning this interpretation, I want to make several observations. First, this interpretation does not explain how the powers of the soul are accidental *qualities*. Recall that Aquinas says not only that the powers of created things are different from their essences, but also that they are accidental qualities of them. But recall that in [Text 2], he ends up putting powers in the category of quality, without advancing any argument for it. Secondly, this interpretation allows one to maintain that there is a distinction in power between creatures and God. In this interpretation, what accounts for the powers being different from the essence is the limited way in which the bearer of the power exists. An infinite being such as God has a power that matches His essence.

Thirdly, given this interpretation of nature of powers of the soul, we need to distinguish
between two kinds of power. On the one hand, there is the power of a form or essence alone, a power that remains infinite in its scope and is linked with an infinite operation; on the other hand, there is the power of a subject, a power linked with a limited operation. Cajetan, who also thinks that Aquinas distinguishes between two kinds of power, remarks that the first kind of power should not be called a power because it is imperfect, by which he seems to mean that is a power that will never be instantiated or manifested.  

Fourthly, again, given this interpretation, Cajetan’s explanation of Aquinas’s view about the powers of accidents makes sense. For Aquinas, in generation, accidents act both in virtue of their own power by preparing the matter for the form, and in virtue of a substance by educing a form from the potency of matter. This raises a problem because it appears as if accidents have two powers: one from themselves, another from the substance. Cajetan clarifies that accidents act in the power of the substance not because they act by a power that they get from the substance and which is different from them and from the substance. He remarks that accidents have powers when they are actualized by inhering in a substance, but he adds that at that moment accidents are not their own powers because powers pertain to that which acts, while to act pertains to that which has being, namely the composite.

Like other medieval philosophers, Aquinas is concerned with maintaining the distinction between God’s powers and creatures’ powers. Only in God are His powers the same as His essence. In creatures, their powers are accidental qualities of them. Aquinas’s point seems to be that in creatures, their powers do not match their essences. Put differently, an actual thing can do less than

26 See Thomaso Vio de Cajetan, In Ia 77.1.9 (Leonine ed. 5: 239): “Ad ea quae tertio obiiciuntur, dicitur quod potentia activa sumi potest dupliciter. Primo, pro proximo operationis principio effectivo ut quo: et sic argumentum concludit; sed non proprie sumitur potentia activa hoc modo, quia non perfecte. Et ideo, proprie loquendo, talis potentia activa, non potentia, sed principium activum vocatur. Secundo, pro proximo operationis effectivo principio ut quo, habente statum potentiae: et tune habet complete rationem potentiae activae; et sic sumitur in proposito, ubi proprie loquimur. Primo modo, calor est potentia calefactiva: secundo modo, non. Et universaliter nulla res est proprie potentia activa, nisi sit talis quod sibi conveniat quandoque esse in actu primo tantum: hoc enim est habere statum potentiae”

27 See also Aquinas, ST I, q. 115, art. 1, ad 5 (Piana: 684b): “Ad quintum dicendum quod corpus agit et ad formam accidentalem, et ad formam substantialem. Qualitas enim activa, ut calor, etsi sit accidentis, agit tamen in virtute formae substantialis, sicut eius instrumentum; et ideo potest agere ad formam substantialem; sicut et calor naturalis, inquantum est instrumentum animae, agit ad generationem carnis. Ad accidens vero agit propria virtute.”

28 See Thomaso Vio de Cajetan, In Ia 77.1.14 (Leonine ed. 5: 239): “apud S. Thomas cum accidens dicitur agere in virtute substantiae est constructio intransitiva, id est ipsa virtus substantiae, hue enim tendit tota responsio quod accidentalis vis non sua sed substantiae est virtus. Quoniam eius est virtus cuius est agere quod est ejus cuius est esse quod non est nisi compositi quod substantiali forma est et accidental est virtute operatur. Non ergo fingas intentionalorem aliquam formam, qua accidens salves agere in virtute substantiae, ut quibusdam visum fuit.”
what is possible for its essence. This is so because powers that ground the actions of actual things depend on these things’ essence, but are also affected by these essences’ limited act of existence. Because any essence, except the divine one, has a limited act of existence, its powers are also limited. Note also that in this view powers emerge or emanate from a composite, when this composite exists; in this way, powers are intrinsic to their bearers.

4.2. Henry of Ghent on the Nature of Causal Powers

Henry’s view about the nature of causal powers retains many of the insights of Aquinas, while also remaining distinct. The main difference from Aquinas is that Henry considers powers to be relations to their acts and, as I will argue, be extrinsic to their bearers.

This section will be organized around three issues. I will start with a comparison between divine and created powers. Next, I will address the problem of powers being relations. The last subsection will discuss the ontological status of powers as relations.

4.2.1. The Imperfection of Created Causal Powers

Like Aquinas, Henry is concerned with preserving the distinction between the powers of God and those of created things. In contrast to Aquinas, Henry finds the imperfection of created powers not in their bearers’ limited acts of being, but in the way their powers are related to their manifestations or acts. This is the claim for which I will argue in this subsection.

In SQO, art. 35, q. 4, Henry describes the truest sense of power:

[Text 7] Therefore, that which because of its perfection and actuality is always naturally apt to act and never suffers from another a change or a certain impediment in its action, and which is always apt to do what is better, insofar as it is possible, and never what is worse, to this pertains the name of active power in the truest sense.29

Something is said to have powers in the truest sense because it does not suffer change or impediments in its activity and these activities are the best possible. Of course, this sense of power applies only to

29 See Henry of Ghent, SQO, art. 35, q. 4 (Leuven 28: 33): “Illud ergo quod ex sua perfectione et actualitate ommino natum est agere et nullo modo ab alio passionem transmutationis recipere vel impedimentum in sua actione quoquo modo, et quod semper natum est agere id quod melius est, secundum quod possibilius est, et numquam id quod est deterius, illi verissime potentia activa convenit.”
the divine power, for only God does not suffer any change or impediments; he also cannot act in a lesser manner than he does. On the other hand, the passive power of matter is the exact opposite of the truest meaning of power, for matter is receptive of all forms, so it suffers the most changes. The powers of created beings are in between these two kinds of powers, for they are usually impeded from manifesting themselves and their manifestations involve motion and change. Thus, while only God is pure power, created things’ powers always involve a kind of possibility, and insofar as this is the case, they are related with change or even suffering a passion.

As early as *Quodl.* III, Henry maintains the view that there is a distinction between created and divine powers: while the active power of the first agent is pure and perfect, the active powers of created beings are mixed. Henry’s argument for this claim is not clear but he seems to reason in the following way: the active powers of created beings are mixed, because to be said to act, created agents require the ‘participation’ of something different from them. Because of this, to explain creatures’ actions, one needs to refer to that item, which is different from their essence, but is required for them to be said to act. Thus, in creatures, their essences alone cannot account for their actions. From this, Henry further infers that while created things have an active power, they also have a passive aspect or power to receive something, probably that item that is required for them to be said to act. On the

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30 Ibid., 33–34: “ista autem est prima materia, quae est pura potentia, et nihil in actu corum quae sunt, quantum est de se omnium imperfectiones in se continens. […] Propert quod diciPhilosophus, IXo Metaphysicae, quod ‘omnes potentiae habent in se definitiones primae materiae et substantiae primae’, quia omnes potentiae activae causandi alicui in alto sunt attributae eidem potentiae, quae est principle activum omnium et prima forma absoluta ab omni materia; ita quod quidquid potest agere, potest per virtutem et influentiam illius, et omnes potentiae passivae recipiendi in se transmutationem naturalem ab alto, sunt attributae eidem formalis quae est principium receptivum omnium, et est prima materia, absoluta ab omni forma.”

31 Ibid., 34: “Verissime igitur in Deo est potentia activa, quia nulli omnino potentiae ut potentiae passivae quae est transmutationis principium, est admixa, sicut est potentia activa cuiuslibet creaturae. Quae frequentor impeditae sunt in suis actionibus, et non nisi per motum aut transmutationem disponuntur ut sint in tali statu, in quo natae sunt agere; ut in solo Deo potentia activa sit pura, et ideo proprie dicatur potestas, cum in creatura qualibet dicatur solum possibilitas quaedam: potestas enim puram respicit actionem, possibilitas vero aliqualem passionem.”

32 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* III, q. 14 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 66rO): “Quae quidem in aliquis sunt pure tamquam in extremis: in quibus inveniuntur primo et per se. In aliquibus autem permixte, tamquam in mediis, in quibus inveniuntur secundario per participationem quandam ad illa prima. Potentia enim activa primo et per se invenitur in primo agente, in quo ipsa potentia sua est pura, quod est sua essentia et quod sua actio indifferens est ab ipsa potentia sua et essentia. […] sed omne aliud agens est per aliquam participationem potentiae a potentia primiti agenti, ita quod essentia sua non sit ratio perfecta sua actionis, sed quod sit per aliucuis alius participationem in suo esse quod dat ei perfectam rationem potentiae. Et propert hoc agens primum solummodo ita est in potentia activa quod caret omni potentiae passive et semper est in sua actione. […] Quodlibet autem aliud agens cum hoc quod est in potentia activa aliquo modo est in potentia passiva receptiva, ita quod completam rationem potentiae activae in se habere non potest sine passione, et aliucuis receptione per quod de potentia quodammodo reducatur in actum. […] Propert quod quantum est de se, non semper est in actu sive in operatione sua.”
other hand, in God alone, His essence is the complete account of His (active) power for to act; God does not need anything extrinsic to Himself.

Created agents have an essence and a power, but to be said to act they need an item different from them: what is this item that even active powers seem to require? The item cannot be a passive power that must be present for the active power to act, because Henry seems to infer the existence of such power in creatures from the fact that to act, creatures need some extra item. In fact, what creatures require to be said to act is the act of their power. There are several reasons why acts fit the description for what Henry has in mind in Quodl. III. First, the acts of created agents are items different from their powers and their essences. Because created agents do not always manifest their powers, when they do, their acts must be different entities from them: this is the reason why at that moment they are said to act. Second, how can something be said to act if an act is not present? The presence of the act is what distinguishes a thing endowed only with a power from a thing endowed with a power which is also acting. Third, acts are present differently to divine and created powers. Divine power is never without its act and in fact it is the same as the act, while a created power sometimes is without its corresponding act and is also distinct from it. To put it slightly differently, what differentiates God from creatures is that God has all his perfections, while creatures do not and so they need to acquire them. Thus, what matters for Henry and what distinguishes divine from created powers is the way the act is present to the power, that is, whether it comes to the power from outside or is always present together with the power. Having the act always present with the power is an indication that the essence is the complete account of a power; not having the act present all the time with the power is an indication that the essence is not the complete account of a power.

In SQO, art. 35, q. 1, we can find textual evidence for the claim that the presence of the act is what distinguishes created powers from the perfect power of God:

[Text 8] It must be said that power is twofold: (1) a kind of power that is really or intentionally distinct from its act, and (2) another kind which is only rationally distinct. Power in the first sense is only in created things. In relation to this kind of power, two [aspects] must be considered, namely the aptitude for the act and the imperfection due to which it lacks the act and by which it is naturally perfected by the act. […] And this is common to both active and passive powers. Regarding the first aspect, power is said relatively to the act; regarding the second aspect, it is said privatively because of the annexed privation to the power. […] And in this way, if this power is brought to the act, it must be that this is done through a certain change, by which that which is imperfect in it is brought to the perfection of the act, either to
the perfection of the form which is said to be the act with respect to the passive power, or to the perfection of the action or operation which is said to be the act with respect to the active power. Power in the second sense is that which is in God, from which, as it is in God, is removed any aspect of imperfection by which it is contrary to the act, remaining only the relation to the act; while it differs only rationally from the act, it coincides with it in the same thing.

This text repeats the claim that created powers are in important ways imperfect when compared with the divine power. The way the act is present to the power accounts for the distinction between created and divine power. In God, His power coincides with His act. For example, being able to understand and having an act of understanding are the same in God. The only distinction that exists between the divine power and the divine act is a rational one, that is, a distinction in how our intellect understands God’s power and His act. From the identity of the power and act, it follows that there is no moment at which the divine power is without the act. The eternal conjunction of the divine power and act is not an accidental feature of the divine power. In fact, the divine power is by its nature such (de se nata) that it cannot exist without its act. In contrast, created powers are by their nature such that they lack their acts: they are conjoined with the privation of the act or the potentiality for it. This applies not only to passive powers, but also to active ones. All created beings’ powers are conjoined with the absence of their acts—this is why they are imperfect. Once these powers manifest, they no longer lack their acts, but they still retain an aspect of relatedness to their acts.

[Text 8] draws attention to an important feature of all powers—all powers involve an aspect of relatedness to an act—and to an important feature of created beings’ powers—these powers are also linked or conjoined with the privation of that act. Indeed, created powers are such that they involve not only a relation to an act, but also the privation of the act. Their conjunction with a privation

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33 See Henry of Ghent, SQO, art. 35, q. 1 (Leuven 28: 8–9): “dicendum quod duplex est potentia: quaedam distincta re vel intentione ab ipso actu, quaedam vero ratione solum. Potentia primo modo est in creaturis solum. In qua est duo considerare, habilitatem scilicet ad actum, et imperfectionem secundum quam deficit ab actu, et in qua nata est perfici per actum. […] Et hoc commune est tam potentiae activae quam passivae. Quoad primum, potentia relative dicitur ad actum; quoad secundum, privative propter potentiam potentiae adnexam, et ita quodammodo contrarie, extendendo nomen contrarietatis ad privativa. Et ideo, si talis potentia debeat deduci ad actum, oportet quod sit per aliquam transmutationem, qua id quod imperfectum est in ea, ad perfectionem actus perducatur, sive perfectione formae quae dicitur actus respectu potentiae passivae, sive perfectione actionis sive operationis quae dicitur actus respectu potentiae activae.”

34 Ibid., 10: “Potentia secundo modo est illa quae est in Deo, a qua, ut est in Deo, amovetur omnis ratio imperfectionis per quam contrariari habit ad actum, manente solo respectu ad actum, differente etiam sola ratione ab ipso, et in idem re coincidit cum actu.”
of their acts accounts for why created powers can exist without their acts, why they can be impeded, and why when their acts exist, created powers are not able to persist in the same way as they were before the existence of their acts. When the act is not present, the relation to the act exists conjoined with a privation of the act, but when the act is present, there is no more privation of that act. However, the bearer of the power still retains an aspect of relatedness to the act—it is this aspect that is the *ratio* or the account of power. Moreover, the conjunction between the aspect of relatedness to the act and the privation of the same act explains the imperfection of created powers. More precisely, it accounts for why these powers’ manifestation requires change. Because created powers are conjoined with the privation of their acts, power and act in created beings are contrary to each other. Since they are contrary, the distinction between power and act is not purely rational, but is a greater than rational distinction, and so there must be a change from the power to act. When we understand something after not understanding, there is a change in us; there is also a change from lacking an act to having it.

Henry agrees with Aquinas’s analysis of power, but for different reasons than Aquinas. Like Aquinas, he argues for the distinction between divine and created powers and the imperfection of the created powers. In contrast to Aquinas, the reason for maintaining these two claims is not the alleged limited act of being of creatures, but the lack of the created beings’ perfections: in contrast to God, created beings do not always possess their acts or operations, that is, their powers are differently related to their manifestations.

35 See Henry of Ghent, *SQQ*, art. 36, q. 2 (Leuven 28: 96–7): “Oportet ergo distinguere de potentia, dicendo quod est quaedam potentia, quae de se nata est esse sine actu et tempore praecedere actum, et est alia potentia, quae non est nata esse nisi simul cum actu et idem cum ipso. Quod considerandum est hoc modo. Quoniam potentia aut dicit aptitudinem solam in subiecto ad actum, aut aptitudinem cum privacione actus, qua potentia contrarietatem habet ad actu, potentia primo modo est illa quae sequitur ad necessarium et non est nisi cum actu, immo ipse actus. Et talis potentia solummodo est illa quae est in Deo et in omnibus aeternis. […] Potentia secundo modo est illa, quae a Philosopho proprium appellatur potentia, et est actui contraria. Et ista potentia, ratione contrarietatis quam habet ad actu, propter privationem quam includit, non manet cum actu, quamquam ratione eius, quod dicit, aptitudinis, manet.”

36 Recall that [Text 7] mentions that the inability to suffer a change is an aspect of something that is powerful in the truest sense.

37 To put it slightly differently, he argues for the view that created powers are limited by drawing attention to the kind of being an act has. To operate is not only accidental to a creature, as for example its being is, but is also an accident. See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* III, q. 14 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 68rX): “Et ideo loqundo de potentia creaturae, non est verum quod sicut se habet esse ad essentiam in creatura, et operari ad potentiam. Quoniam esse licet sit accidental ad potentiam, sit actus essens tamen intension alia sihi adveniens, inquantum secundum quod est aliquid in existentia rerum est effectus Dei. […] Operari autem creaturae omnino accidental ad potentiam est ei, quia hoc non convenit ei, nisi omnino accidentaliter, et est accidens ei differens re ab ipse essentia et ideo potentia creaturae.”
4.2.2. Powers and Aspects of Relatedness to Acts

For Henry, the term ‘potency’ or ‘power’ signifies an essence under an aspect of relatedness to an act. As we will see, this means that for Henry, powers are relations. In this subsection, I explain why Henry maintains that powers are relations by explaining what it means for powers to be determinations of an essence. But if powers are nothing other than relations, Scotus contends, they can neither cause nor explain the existence of their effects. Against this objection, I will argue that although Henry never intends to claim that powers cause their effects, he defends the view that they have causal explanatory roles.

In discussing divine powers, Henry says:

[Text 9] It must be said that it pertains to the nature of a power insofar as it is a power that it is spoken of regarding an act so that it [that is, the power] is not some absolute thing, but rather just this aspect of relatedness (respectus) that is based on a thing on something absolute.\(^{38}\)

Powers involve aspects of relatedness to an effect or act. For example, heat’s causal power involves such an aspect of relatedness to the act of heating. Because these aspects of relatedness need a foundation in which they are grounded, powers also involve some non-relational or absolute features. For example, the power of heat is some absolute feature of heat under the aspect of being related to the act of heating. Because these absolute or non-relational features are the same features that constitute heat’s essence or nature, the power of heat is the heat’s nature under an aspect of being related to the act of burning.

[Text 9] reflects Henry’s view on the nature of all powers. Created beings have two kinds of

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\(^{38}\) See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 35, q. 2 (Leuven 28: 15): “Dicendum ad hoc, quod de ratione potentiae in quantum potestia est quod dicatur ad actum, ita quod nihil absolutum sit, sed solus respectus fundatus in re super aliquo absoluto.” Henry sometimes understands the aspect of being related to something (respectus) as a relation. See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 35, q. 8, 81: “sciendum quod omnis respectus est relatio, et e converso, generaliter utendo nomine relationis, ita quod vera relatio est verus respectus et realis relatio realis respectus.” J.C. Flores puts very succinctly the distinction between *respectus* and *relatio*: “Only if the *respectus* is also a name of the foundation related as well as of its relatedness can the *respectus* be called a relation. Accordingly, strictly speaking, relation signifies the thing or foundation as related, not its very relatedness.” See Juan Carlos Flores, *Henry of Ghent: Metaphysics and the Trinity; With a Critical Edition of Question Six of Article Fifty-Five of the Summa Quaestionum Ordinarum* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 163. Thus, it seems that strictly speaking the term *respectus* refers to the aspect of being related, while the term *relatio* refers to the foundation and the aspect of being related. That Henry considers the powers of created beings as relations is a point on which contemporary scholars agree. For example, Richard Cross argues that for Henry, “having a power amounts to having a relation to an act.” See Cross, “Accidents, Substantial Forms, and Causal Powers,” 137. The same view can be found in Paasch, *Divine Production in Late Medieval Trinitarian Theology*, 118. I follow JT Paasch in translating *respectus* as ‘aspect of relatedness’.
power. They have powers in virtue of absolute features that can be accidental to them. For example, a hot pot has the power to heat another object in virtue of having heat. Heat is accidental to the pot, for, as our daily experience shows us, in their natural state pots are cold—that's why we need to heat them. Henry also maintains that created beings have powers in virtue of some absolute features that constitute their own essences or natures. In discussing the powers of the soul, he says:

[Text 10] At its source, nothing is a power in [the soul] except its simple substance, which considered in itself is the essence or the substance or the form of the animated being; considered insofar as [this essence] is made diverse by diverse determinations or operations towards diverse acts and diverse objects, [the soul] is said to be diverse powers, which do not posit over its substance anything other than an aspect of relatedness (respectus) to acts that differ in kind.39

The power of the soul is one because its source is one, namely the soul as the form of the body, but many because it is related to many different acts. For example, a soul’s specific activities are to think, to will, to sense, etc. What allows the soul to have specific episodes or acts of thinking, willing, sensing, etc. are the different causal powers that the soul has, such as the intellect, the will, and the senses. In contrast to Aquinas, Henry envisages the powers of the soul as the soul under different aspects of relatedness to different kinds of acts. The powers of intellect, will, and sensation are constituted from these aspects of relatedness to the soul’s different operations, such as thinking, willing, perceiving etc.40

Why does Henry maintain that powers are essences under the aspects of relatedness to different acts? One possible answer is that this is so because powers are identified relationally. Because we see fire and incidents of burning, we deduce that fire has the power for burning. If this were Henry’s motivation, he would need to concede that powers are dependent on human intellectual abilities.

39 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. III, q. 14 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 67rS): “Cum in radice nihil sit potentia in eadem nisi eius simplex substantia, quae in se considerata, essentia sive substantia est et forma animati, considerata vero secundum diversas esse per diversas determinationes et operationes ad diversas actiones et ad diversas objecta, dicitur potentiae diversae quae non ponunt super essentiam eius nisi solum respectum ad diversos actus specie.”

40 Ibid., fol. 68vZ: “dicatur potentia intellectiva ex comparatione quam habet ad operationem quam secundum se habet elicere. Dicatur vero potentia sensitiva ex comparatione quam habet ad operationem quam habet elicere ut existens in organo. Et dicatur diverse potentiae secundum quod diversimode habet determinari ad diversas operationes specie et intellectuales et sensuales.” It is important to note that in Quodl. III, q. 14, Henry mentions twice that powers are defined in relation to acts. Ibid., fol. 68rY: “Potentia enim non definitur nisi ex relatione ad actum” and ibid., fol. 70r: “Potentia est enim id quod est dicitur ex relatione ad actum.” Given that on fol. 68r Henry remarked that powers are defined in relation to acts, I understand ex comparatione to refer to a relation.
Instead, he emphasizes that powers, being aspects of relatedness, do not depend on our intellectual abilities.\footnote{See below \text{[Text 13]}.}

To understand why Henry thinks that powers involve aspects of relatedness, we need to understand what he means by powers being determinations of an essence to an act. Recall that the term ‘determination’ appeared in the last chapter when I explained Henry’s view about the causal contribution of causal powers to an action: although neither powers nor essences act, an essence cannot be what accounts for an action or a passion unless this essence is determined to an act, or unless it has a power.

Henry explains in more depth the role of determination when discussing the powers of the soul:

\textbf{[Text 11]} It must be said that the soul is determined to different acts, acts that differ either in genus, or species, or number. The acts of understanding, willing, and sensing differ in genus; the acts of seeing and hearing differ in species; the acts of understanding or willing this or that differ in number. Therefore, I say that in the first and second determinations the soul is determined only by the producer of the soul, who gave to the essence, according to what it is, that it is capable of those acts that differ in genus or species, but not effectively unless by a determination from the organs. […] In the third kind of determination, the soul is determined by the objects.\footnote{See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 454vP): “Dicendum quod anima determinatur ad diversos actus vel secundum genus vel secundum speciem vel secundum numerum. Genere enim aut specie differunt intelligere, velle, sentire. Specie autem differunt videre et audire. Numero vero differunt intelligere, velle et hoc vel illud. Dico ergo determinatione prima et secunda determinatur a solo producente animam, qui essentiae eius secundum id quod est indedit quod potens est ad illos actus differentes genere vel specie, licet non cum effectu nisi per determinationem ab organis. […] Tertia autem determinationem determinatur ab obiectis.” I omit Henry’s reference to the determination of passive causal powers of the soul. For details about the determination of these powers see Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} III, q. 14.}

Determining something to something else means relating the two things. There are three kinds of determination. The first and second kind are of a soul to acts of different genera and species and are done by what creates the soul, namely God. For example, God relates or determines souls to acts of thinking, willing, or perceiving; when God connects a soul with a body having suitable organs, he relates or determines the soul to more specific acts such as the acts of seeing, hearing, tasting, etc. The third determination is of the soul to real, existing, numerically distinct acts such as the act of smelling this rose, seeing this colour, etc., and it is done by objects that one encounters. Only the first
two determinations explain what it means for something to have a power, and nothing has a power without being determined to generically and specifically distinct acts; the third determination explains the actual manifestation of a power, for powers manifest themselves when the essence of a thing that has a power is determined by an object. For example, to have the power of sight, the soul needs to be united with a body having organs for seeing, for only the existence of such a body further determines the generic power of sensation; but to manifest the power of sight, the presence and action of a suitable object is required.

How does God determine an essence to an act? In [Text 11], Henry explicitly states that the determination of the essence to an act is done according to what the essence is. This means that, in determining an essence to an act, God is limited by what is possible or impossible for an essence:

[Text 12] One should not inquire into what God can do concerning creatures, but into what can be done concerning them, for all that God can do; and what cannot be done concerning a creature, God also cannot do concerning it.44

God cannot determine an essence to an operation or activity that is impossible for this essence (e.g., he cannot determine the essence of fire to cause something to be cold). But he can determine an essence to an activity that is possible for that essence.

If an activity is already possible for an essence, why is there any need for further determination? There are many activities that are possible for an essence, and it might be that only some of these activities fit with the divine intentions. So, in determining an essence to one or multiple activities, God decides from among all the possibilities for an essence the ones that are to be instantiated. In doing this, He chooses what essences are to be created and what they can do and

43 I have two reasons to believe that this is what Henry means. First, the opposite view is the Megarian view (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IX.3, 1046b29–32). Like the Megarians, Henry would be committed to the view that a thing has powers when it acts. But in contrast to the Megarians, he would allow both for causal powers for generically and specifically distinct acts and for causal powers that a thing receives when it acts. Were this the case, a question would arise: why does an object need the first kind of power (the ones that are from God and are for specifically and generically distinct acts)? Indeed, on this view, in actual causal interactions only the powers an object receives when it acts are relevant; the powers an object receives from God would be superfluous. In fact, Richard Cross mentions the possibility that this is Henry’s view, but dismisses it; see Cross, “Accidents, Substantial Forms, and Causal Powers,” 137–38. Second, to my knowledge, there is no text in which Henry clearly states that in the third determination, a thing receives a power, while there are texts in which he uses the term ‘power’ in relation to the first two determinations. So, my second argument is *ex silentio*.

suffer. For example, to cause dryness is a possible action of fire. When God decides to give fire a power to dry, He not only decides to create fire, but also dryness. Thus, not only the essence of fire needs to exist for fire to have a power, but the activity of making something dry also needs to fit in God’s divine plan for the whole creation.

This picture gets a bit complicated. There are indeed activities that are so strongly connected with an essence that not even God can make that essence without the power to bring about these activities. For example, the capacity for laughing is such that not even God can make a human being without it. This capacity is a necessary property of what a human being is. Other activities, however, pertain to an essence only if that essence is also connected with something else. For example, souls can have sensations but only if they are combined with a body. In choosing to create souls and bodies, God determines souls to sensation, that is, he endows souls with the power of sensing. When a soul is united with a specific type of body, its powers are further determined. For example, when united with a body lacking the organ of seeing, a soul will still have the general power for sensing (this power is in a way a consequence of the soul’s needing a body), but it will not have the power for seeing.

In this interpretation, things do not have powers fully in virtue of their nature or essences. The only powers that are good candidates for being fully explained by the essence of their bearer are the necessary ones (such as the capacity for laughing). But even in their case, the essence alone is not sufficient to explain the powers; God must also want to create a thing with that essence. The claim that essences cannot alone ground their powers is clearer in the case of powers other than the necessary ones. These powers are powers not only because God decides to make their bearers exist, but also because he wants the acts of these powers to exist too. For example, fire’s power to dry is based on fire’s essence but also on the existence of things that can be dried and, so, on God’s plan to create them.

If this interpretation is correct, many if not all the powers of created beings are extrinsic to

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45 Ibid., 411: “Dicendum ergo ad quaestionem quod (1) aut risibile intantum inhaeret humanae naturae quantum habere tres angulos inheret triangulo, […] (2) aut sicut accidens sine qua nunquam inventur. […] Si primo modo planum est quod homo non est nisi sit risibilis licet enim sit accidens eius. Tamen essentia hominis in eo quod homo est non est nisi habilitas quaedam ad actum ridendi, quod appellatur esse risibile. Et ideo nec deus potest facere quod homo esset et non esset risibilis. Si vero sit de secundo genere sic posset esse et non risibile, et deus posset illud facere. Et puto quod risibile sit de primo genere.” Henry’s view about what God can do about necessary properties is also noted by Christopher J. Martin, “Flights of Fancy: Avicenna’s Arguments for the Incorporeality of the Soul and Their Interpretation,” in The Segerberg Collection: Seven Easy Pieces in Honour of Krister (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2002), 43–57.

46 I thank Jennifer McKittrick for encouraging me to inquire more into whether Henry thinks about powers as being extrinsic to an essence.
their bearers. Insofar as Henry’s powers can be said to be properties (recall [Text 1] from the previous chapter), they are extrinsic properties in the intuitive sense: they depend on what happens outside of an essence,\textsuperscript{47} namely on what God wants to create, on the existence of other objects, and on other essences. They are extrinsic also because they are only partially grounded in their foundations, namely in the essences that have them.\textsuperscript{48} To fully account for a thing’s power, one needs to refer to God and his plan for creation.

Are Henry’s powers also extrinsic powers? One way in which powers are extrinsic is if keeping the laws of nature fixed, a thing acquires or loses powers independently of the thing’s nature.\textsuperscript{49} Jennifer McKittrick gives a series of examples of powers or dispositions that are extrinsic although the laws of nature remains the same. For example, a person’s weight of $x$ lb. (that is, “the disposition to elicit a reading of $x$ on a properly constructed scale in the person’s local gravitational field”) is a disposition that must be extrinsic, for the same person will have different weights on earth and the moon. Without any change in the intrinsic properties of a person, that person can lose the property of weighing $x$ lb.\textsuperscript{50} Many of Henry’s powers seems to be extrinsic in this way. Take the case of the power of sensation. This power gets specified into the power for seeing, hearing, touching etc. when the souls is united with a body with different organs. Without any intrinsic change in the essence of the soul, the soul has now some powers that it did not have before.\textsuperscript{51}


\textsuperscript{48} One way in which Rae Langton and David Lewis explain intrinsic properties is that they are those that “things have in virtue of the way they themselves are.” Extrinsic properties are then those that are not possessed in virtue of what a thing is. See Rae Langton and David Lewis, “Defining ‘Intrinsic,’” \textit{Philosophy and Phenomenological Research} 58, no. 2 (1998): 340.

\textsuperscript{49} For different ways in which powers can be extrinsic see McKittrick, “A Case for Extrinsic Dispositions,” 158–59.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 165–7. One might object that this example is misleading because the property of weighing $x$ lb is not taken sufficiently rigidly, that is, one needs to specify the person’s gravitational field, by saying whether a person’s weight of $x$ lb is on the earth or on the moon. If specified sufficiently, the disposition does not seem to be extrinsic anymore. McKittrick’s answer to this point is to acknowledge that one can indeed specify the weight so that it includes a specific gravitational field, for example, earth’s, but this does not mean that there cannot be a disposition such as having the weight of $x$ lb, and this property will be extrinsic.

\textsuperscript{51} One might question this point, for Henry emphasizes that properly speaking the specified powers of the soul, for example, the sensitive powers, are powers of the composite of body and soul, and not powers of the soul alone. Although this is important, note that he also acknowledges that the root of all powers remains the soul, not the composite of soul and body. See Henry of Ghent \textit{Qwqd. III}, q. 14 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 71rE): “alio modo determinatur in anima potentiae sensitivae, alio modo potentiae intellectivae. Illae (i.e potentiae sensitivae) enim determinantur in anima ex dispositione organi ante informationem specierum per quas actu sentit; immo potius determinantur in composito, quia proprie, ut
For Henry, powers track possibilities. An essence that is not instantiated does not have any power; it only has a set of possibilities that are open to it. An essence has a power only when God decides to instantiate it together with all or a part of its set of possibilities. Thus, things have powers because some operations or acts are possible for them in virtue of their essences. On the other hand, powers are more than mere possibilities: without God willing the possible acts or operations of an essence to become actual, that is, without determining an essence to these operations, there are no causal powers. But since a power is this determination of an essence to the specifically and generically distinct acts that are possible for that essence, a power must be constituted by an aspect of relatedness between an essence and these acts, because this determination is a relation between an essence and these acts.

Understanding Henry in this way, one can answer an important objection raised by John Duns Scotus. His objection is the following: as principles of operations, that is, of actions, causal powers are naturally prior to their operations or effects, since they cause them. Aspects of relatedness or relations, however, come about only when both relata are already present. If a power is constituted when an aspect of relatedness supervenes on a thing or essence to that thing’s or essence’s proper effects, it would come about after the effects have already been caused.52

Scotus assumes that if powers involve aspects of relatedness, they must be aspects relating an essence to real existing acts. For example, water’s causal power should involve an aspect of water relating it to the dissolving of a cube of sugar at a certain moment. He makes this assumption because he also assumes that to explain the causation of actual effects, causal powers need to have causal efficacy. Moreover, he also thinks that powers as described by Henry cannot be real. Before the manifestation of the power, the act to which the power is related has an existence only as a being of reason; but an aspect of relatedness or a relation is not real if one of the relata is not real.53 But if in Henry’s understanding powers are not real, they cannot play explanatory roles.

dictum est, sunt potentiae compositi et non animae, nec sunt in anima nisi sicut in radice ex qua causantur dispositiones organi et determinantur rationes potentiarum animae in ipsa.”

52 See Scotus, Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un., fol. 179r: “Item potentia quae est per se principium operandi est prius natura effectu, id est, operatione; sed potentia cum respectu coassumpto, est simul cum effectu, quia sub illo respectu est correlativum respectu operationis.” This argument is briefly discussed by both Richard Cross and JT Paasch in the works mentioned in footnote 38 above.

53 See Scotus, QVM V, q. 11 (OPh 4: 589): “Numquam in uno extremo est relatio realis et in alio rationis, quia impossibile est rem et ens rationis simul esse natura; tunc enim res dependeret ab intellectu, quia a correlativo.”
It is true that for Henry, powers do not have causal efficacy—I have already discussed this aspect of his view in the last chapter. But recall that for him powers are still relevant for explaining the causation of acts. As determinations of an essence, powers account for two features: (1) because of a power, the essence is related to an act and has “almost an inclination” to elicit it; (2) powers account for the diverse acts of an agent. The first aspect is so important that unless an essence is determined to an act, the essence cannot be what accounts for this act. But neither the essence nor the power cause the act—what causes the act is an agent. Nevertheless, powers play an explanatory role of the action for they are part of what accounts for an action, although are not what causes the action.\(^{54}\) Despite this clarification, Scotus’s objection is still not fully answered.

What remains to be addressed is the question whether, because they involve aspects of relatedness (or are relations), powers are real for Henry. Scotus argues that they are not for one of their \(relata\) is not an actual thing. I grant that Henry does not take powers to involve aspects of relatedness of essences to actual acts, nevertheless, he takes powers to be real. Powers do not involve aspects of relatedness to beings of reason because the specifically and generically distinct acts to which essences are determined by God cannot be beings of reason produced by a human or angelic intellect—they are prior to them. They cannot be beings of reason produced by the divine mind for an essence is not determined to the ideas in the divine mind. Essences are determined to some specifically and generically distinct acts that will get actualized at some point. These acts are real because they are part of God’s creation, but not yet actual—they will get actualized when the right circumstances are met.

In the end, Henry’s view of powers as essences under aspects of relatedness cannot be criticized just because powers do not produce acts. Henry himself acknowledges this: powers are not the right kind of entities to produce acts. But powers’ inactivity is not sufficient to make them otiose—they still play explanatory roles (together with essences) for they account for why agents act.

Let me end this section with a short comment on how Henry’s view about powers is different from that of Aquinas. Aquinas uses the term ‘potentia’ both in relation to un-instantiated essences and

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\(^{54}\) See Henry of Ghent, \(SQO\), art. 39, q. 4 (Leuven 28: 198): “Et sic ad agendum actum aliquem a persona divina ut a principali agente, duplex ratio qua agit eum, requiritur: una ut qua ipsum [corr. from ipsam] elicir, alia ut qua eliciens actum respectit, et determinatur sibi actus. Primo modo dico, ut iam dictum est, quod sola divina essentia secundum rationem essentiae est ratio agendi omnes divinas actiones, scilicet in elicienda ipsas. Secundo vero modo dico, quod respectus fundati in divina essentia sunt ratio agendi a Deo divinas actiones, scilicet in determinando ipsas ut eliciantur, ita videlicet, quod unica est ratio omnis eliciens, scilicet ipsa divina essentia sub sua ratione absoluta qua essentia est, plures vero sunt rationes determinantes secundum pluralitatem actuam, scilicet ipsi respectus diversi.”
instantiated essences. In the second case, the interesting case, for Aquinas powers are emergent properties that are grounded in an essence having a limited act of being. Because powers depend only on the essence and existence of their bearer, powers are intrinsic for Aquinas. In contrast, Henry uses the term ‘potentia’ only in relation to essences and acts that will be instantiated at some moment in time. Determining an essence to an act means creating that essence and allowing for that act to exist at some point in the world. But because the determining of an essence requires both the creation of that essence and of the act to which the essence is determined, powers cannot be strictly speaking said to be intrinsic to an essence: they depend not only on God wanting to create a certain essence but also on him wanting a certain act to exist. If God does not want to allow for the existence of an act in his creation, although that act might be a possible consequence of an essence, it remains only a possibility, and the essence does not have any power to bring it about. Thus, in contrast to Aquinas, Henry maintains that powers are extrinsic to their bearers.

4.2.3. Powers and Essences

Henry claims that not only accidental forms, but also substantial forms have powers by themselves. The reason why this must be the case, Henry argues, is that otherwise things will not be able to cause their own operations. But in making the point that even substantial forms have powers by themselves, Henry makes the further puzzling claim that powers are the same as the essence of a substance since they are not its accidents:

[Text 13] [T]o the question which he is constantly asking whether the power is the same as the substance of the product or is an accident of it: I reply […] that it is not its accident, because every given thing is able, through the form through which it is what it is, [to perform] its own operation and [to cause] that which is produced by that [operation] as light is able to illuminate and heat is able to make hot.55

How can powers be constituted from an essence and aspect of relatedness but also be the same as the essences of their bearers? In this subsection, I will address this question.

First let me note that these questions can be raised not only in relation to the essences of

55 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 453rX–v): “ad hoc respondendo ad quaestionem quam quaerit continue de illa virtute an sit idem cum substantia producti an accidens eius, dicendo quod non est accidens eius quia unumquodque per suam formam qua est id quod est, potens est in suam operationem, et in illud quod per ipsam habet produci ut lux ad lucendum, calor ad calefaciendum.”
substances, but also to the essences of accidents. Arguing against Aquinas, Henry defends the claim that powers are not accidents of an essence, but the same as the essence that has the power:

[Text 14] Nevertheless, it must be posited that a certain created nature is from its essence a power to cause something in something else. For example: in the case of the fire, which heats by heat, [which is] its power to heat, the essence of this heat, which is a possible quality, is not something different from the power. Indeed, that essence of heat is the same as that power of heating in the fire, not something naturally added to it [for] otherwise, unless we could stop in something by which it acts, which is according to its essence that power, there would be a regress _ad infinitum._

Against Aquinas, Henry argues that some natures or forms must be their own powers. He correctly understands Aquinas as saying that accidents are not their own powers (because they are powers of the substance). Thus, he argues that there must be some created natures that are powers by themselves, for otherwise we will run into a regress _ad infinitum_. Why is that so? Henry proposes the following case: let the accident of heat be different from its power. This means that heat will have a power by a power that is an accident different from it, but this second accident also needs to have a power through an accident different from it, and so on _ad infinitum._

The view that powers are not accidents of an essence is also used by Henry to reject Aquinas’s view about the powers of substantial forms. While Aquinas claims that the powers of the substantial forms must always be accidents, Henry sees no impossibility if substantial forms are their own powers. In fact, he points out that if substantial forms are not their own powers, then one cannot explain how

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56 See Henry of Ghent, _Quodl._ III, q. 14 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 66vP): “Quod tamen aliqua natura creat a sit ex sua essentia potentia aliquid agendi in alio necessario est ponere. Verbi gratia: cum ignis calefacit calore ut potentia calefaciendi ibi non est aliquid essentia ipsius caloris que est passibilis qualitas et aliquid ipsa potentia. Immo ipsa essentia caloris est ipsa potentia calefaciendi in igne, non aliquid additum ei naturaliter, alter enim est abire in infinitum nisi esset stare in aliquo quo aliquid agit quod in essentia sua est ipsa potentia. Quia si potentia non esset re essentia ipsa esset re aliquid additum ei. Et de illa re esset quaestio eadem, utrum esset potentia qua aliquid agere quod si negaretur, quaestio illa procederet in infinitum, ut patet.” Discussing this argument, Richard Cross says that “Henry (wrongly) understands Aquinas to be claiming that the causal powers bestowed on composite substances by accidents are likewise somehow distinct from the accident itself” and so he concludes that “Aquinas would be happy with” the conclusion of Henry’s argument, but only if these created natures are accidents. But if my argument in the section 4.1.2 is correct, then Cross is wrong to believe that Aquinas would agree with Henry that accidental forms are powers by themselves. (See Cross, “Accidents, Substantial Forms, and Causal Powers,” 135–37.) Moreover, Henry’s point that something must be a power through itself is a legitimate objection that Aquinas himself mentions in _ST_ I, q. 77, art. 1 in one of the arguments against his own view.
a substance is generated. Henry’s worry is probably that if a thing is generated by accidental forms alone, accidents seem to have caused something beyond their species.

Although powers are the same as the essence, in the continuation of [Text 13] in Quodl. XI, q. 6, Henry stresses that the aspect of relatedness that enters the constitution of a power is real:

[Text 15] This, indeed, I concede: for as [a substance] is not effective of something unless because of its aspect of being an [active] power, so a substance is not receptive of something [unless because of its aspect of being a passive power]. I do not care how one calls the distinction between the substance, [which is] fundamental for that aspect of relatedness, and the aspect itself, [namely a distinction] either according to reason or according to an intention, as long as we understand that the aspect of relatedness is real from the nature of the thing, and not rational from the consideration of our intellect.

To understand [Text 15], recall how essences acquire power, that is, how they are determined to an act or how an aspect of relatedness supervenes on them to this act. It is true that God plays a role in how this happens, by deciding to allow the creation of the act that is possible for an essence, but at the moment He allows for this act in His creation, an aspect of relatedness necessarily supervenes on the essence and the act. Although the aspect of relatedness is extrinsically advenient to the essence because it depends on God allowing the creation of the act, it is the product neither of the divine intellect nor of a human intellect. [Text 15] emphasizes the point that the aspect is real because it supervenes on an essence independently of any intellect considering how that essence is related to an act. This is the important point that one needs to keep in mind in thinking about the reality of powers.

Until now, I have focused on two claims that Henry makes: (a) powers are not accidents of an essence but the same as the essence that is said to have a power; and (2) the aspect of relatedness that constitutes a power is real. But given claim (2), why, when composed with an essence, does the aspect of relatedness not make an accidental composite? Put differently, why is the power as something

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57 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. III, q. 14 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 66vP): “Unde etiam in formis substantialibus que sunt actus tantum non nati per se existere nec agere separatim nullum est inconveniens quod ipsa essentia earum est ipsa potentia qua compositum agit suam propriam et per se actionem debitam ei ratione formae substantialis. Non solum enim rationem formae accidentalis debetur composito quod agat ut ignis quod calefacit sed etiam ratione formae substantialis ut quod ignem sibi consimilem de materia generet.”

58 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 453vB): “Hoc bene concedo sicut enim non est effectiva alcius nisi sub ratione qua est potentia, sic nec receptiva. Qualitercumque autem nominetur differentia inter substantiam fundamentalem huui respectus et ipsum respectus, sive secundum rationem sive secundum intentionem, dum tamen intelligamus quod sit respectus realis ex natura rei, non autem rationalis ex intellectus nostri consideratione, de hoc non est mihi curae ad propositum.”
composed of an essence and an aspect of relatedness really identical with the essence? To answer this problem, we need to inquire more about the ontological status of the aspect of relatedness. This aspect, being relational, should be an accident, for in the Aristotelian ontology relations are accidents. But it is not an accident, although it is something added to an essence. Moreover, this aspect does not inhere in the essence nor can it be separated from it.59

Henry elucidates the ontological status of this aspect of relatedness when he discusses his view of relations.60 The ontological status of relations is tackled in the context of the discussion about how some of the Aristotelian categories can be applied to God.61 To answer this question, Henry needs to address two fundamental philosophical issues: one about the reality of the things that are classified in the ten categories and another one about the adequate account of each of the ten ways of classifying beings that Aristotle proposes.62 Addressing these issues, he defends the view that all categories have distinct accounts that say something about how things are, but only items in the first three categories are things that exist or can exist. For example, substances are things that exist by themselves, while qualities and quantities are things that exist in something else, either by informing their subject, as qualities do, or by measuring it, as quantities do.63 The remaining categories refer to circumstances or modes of being of these things64 so that without the things of which they are

59 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IX, q. 3 (Leuven 13: 55): “sed illud sic debemus intelligere quod habitudinem, quae nuda est secundum se et non nisi modus quidam, ipsum fundamentum, in quantum fundatur in ipso, characterizat, communicans ei per hoc quodam modo realitatem suam, in eo videlicet quod habitudinem, quae circumscriptra realitate fundamenti ut in se et per se consideratur, purus modus essendi ad alium est, in quo nulla cadit distinctio aut differentia aut determinatio.”


61 This seems to be a problem motivated by a purely theological concern originating in two problematic claims, namely that there are relations in God and that relations seem to be accidents.

62 These questions concern what Henry calls the *res predicamenti* and the *ratio predicamenti*. For a definition of these concepts, see Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 32, q. 5 in Henry of Ghent, *Summa (Quaestiones ordinariae)* art. XXXI–XXXIV, ed. Raymond Macken, Henrici de Gandavo Opera Omnia 27 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1991), 79.

63 See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 32, q. 2 (Leuven 27: 36): “Ut ratio substantiae est subsistere sive substrate, res praeedicamenta substantiae est omne illud cui convenit ista ratio; ‘ratio quantitatis est secundum partes rem mensurare, res quantitatis est omne illud in quo se ratio talis invenitur, ut est primo quantitas discreta, deinde continua’ […] Ratio propria qualitatis est subiectum informare. […] Res qualitatis est omne cui talis ratio convenit.”

64 See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 32, q. 5 (Leuven 27: 94): “dicimus quod septicum praeedicamenta quae de formali significacione sua potius praeedicat circumstantias rerum quam rem aliquam, cum distinguuntur per accidentale quod subest respectui quem dicunt, et super quod fundatur ille respectus, ergo aut illud accidentale convenit rei subjectae
circumstances, they cannot exist. In fact, items in these seven categories all signify something insofar as it is related to something else, so they are relational in nature. But relations cannot add any thing above the reality of their foundation.

One argument for the claim that relations do not add anything above the reality or existence of their foundations is based on the impossibility of relations existing independently of their foundation. To show that this is the case, Henry invites us to consider what relations are without their foundations. Were we to take away their foundations (substances, qualities, and quantities), relations would be reduced to only aspects of relatedness or modes of being towards something else that would not be specifically distinguished in any way, and therefore they cannot exist by themselves. Consider the case of a master and a slave. A person is a master in relation to a slave because he has power over the slave, while another person is a slave in relation to a master because he cannot resist his master. Both the power of the master and the incapacity of the slaves are qualities, because they are a kind of disposition in these beings. If we were to take away these qualities so that only an aspect of relatedness remains both in the master and in the slave, these aspects should be the same.

A second argument is based on the nature of relational change. If relations have their own
reality independently from the reality of their foundations, then any time there is a new relation between things, these things suffer a change by acquiring a new entity. For example, if Socrates, who was previously white, starts resembling Plato because both are now black, both Socrates and Plato would change by acquiring a new entity, the relation of resemblance to each other. But this is counterintuitive because only Socrates can be said to change from white to black, while Plato remains the same.\textsuperscript{69}

Ontologically, relations are for Henry items that have reality, that is, they exist or are able to exist, but their existence is entirely on that of their foundations. But since there are two kinds of foundation, namely accidental and substantial forms, there are two kinds of relation: accidental or substantial.\textsuperscript{70} For example, while a relation of similitude between two accidents has as much existence as an accident, a relation that is founded on a substance has as much existence as that substance.

Relations are modes of being of their foundations. Modes of being are always the modes of being of something. They are also about a thing in such a way that they cannot be ontologically detached from that thing and made to exist by themselves. We might understand them as being separate, but this will be just our way of understanding them and not the way they are. In Quodl. IX, q. 3, Henry summarizes his view about the reality of relations:

[Text 16] [A] relation contracts its reality from its foundation, and that by itself is nothing other than a pure condition, which is nothing other than a mode of a thing relating to

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 24–25: “Si relatio poneret propriam realitatem aliam a realitate sui fundamenti in suo subiecto relato, tunc de se non relatum aliquam relatione, puta similitudine, quia nullam habet in se respectu alicuius alterius, puta Sortes albus in respectu ad Platonem nigrum, non fieri relatum ad illud similitudine quam haberet in se de novo et prius non habuit, nisi quia res aliqua de novo facta est in eo, quae prius in eo non fuit. Hoc autem non est possibile fieri in aliquo sine propria sui transmutatione. Sortes ergo non similis Platoni, non posset fieri similis eidem sine sua transmutatione reali. Consequens falsum est, quia Platone transmutato secundum alterationem in qualitate, ut de nigro fiat albus, statim Sortes sine omni sua transmutatione de novo factus est similis Platoni. Falsum est ergo, quod simililitudo in ipso importat rem aliam praeter rem sui fundamenti.”

\textsuperscript{70} See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. V, q. 2 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 154vI): “tota tamen accidentalitate habet relatio ratione suae realitatis, quam non habet propriam, sed contrahit eam a re alterius predicamenti accidentis supra quam fundatur. […] Ita quod ratione eius quod est esse ad alium ut ad objectum nullam rationem accidentis habet, sed solum ex comparatione quam habet ad subiectum in quo habet esse id a quo habet suam accidentalitatem. Quia enim albedo accidens est in subiecto, ideo simililitudo fundata super albedinem accidentis est in codem, ita quod quodcumque respectus super nudam substantiam fundatur, nihil accidentalitatis omnino in se habet, sed est relatio substantialis non accidentalis.”
something else, and so it is not a thing by itself, but only the mode of a thing, unless by extending [the sense of] ‘thing’ so that even a mode is said to be a thing.71

A relation is a mode of a thing, by which mode the thing is towards something else. But what exactly does this mean? How can a relation be the mode of a thing towards something else? Recall that in the last chapter I explained the distinction between how we usually conceive relations nowadays and relational properties. Nowadays, we envisage relations as entities not only different from their termini, but also separated from them, as a kind of bridge between the two. The medieval way of envisaging a relation is by thinking of its foundation as being towards something else. For example, the relation of being the father of Carl is not an entity separate from John, for in fact it is in John. In the latter case, being the father of Carl is a relational property of John. For Henry, the mode of being towards something else is like a relational property. I say ‘like a relational property’, because medieval philosophers think that most properties are entities really distinct from the thing that has the properties, while for Henry a relation is not really distinct from the thing that has the mode of being towards something else.

How is this view about relations relevant for Henry’s view about powers? A power is an essence under the aspect of relatedness to an act. Since Henry’s definition of power maps exactly onto how he understands a relation, we can say that for Henry powers are just relations. As relations, they are essences having a mode of being towards something else. Depending on the foundations, powers are accidental relations (for instance, the power of heat) or substantial relations (for instance, the power of the substance to cause its proper and inseparable accidents). As in the case of relations, powers are the same as their foundations, but also distinct from these foundations, because the foundations can be in another way of being than they are when they are related to specific kind of acts.72

71 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. IX, q. 3 (Leuven 13: 56): “relatio realitate suam contrahit a suo fundamento, et quod ex se non est nisi habitudo nuda, quae non est nisi modus quidam rem habendi ad alium, et ita non res quantum est ex se, sed solummodo modus rei, nisi extendendo rem ut etiam modus rei dicatur res.”

72 If we want to be more precise about how powers are the same but also distinct from essences, we can say that powers are intentionally distinct from them. In Quodl. V, q. 6, Henry explains that an intention is “something that really pertains to the simplicity of the essence of something [and] it is naturally conceived without another item from which it does not really differ [and] that similarly pertains to the same essence.” See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. V, q. 6 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 161r). An intention is a feature of an essence, which feature the mind can recognize and conceive without conceiving another feature of the same essence. I say ‘able to recognize’ because (a) an intention is not a creation of the mind and (b) it pertains to an essence. (For more on the issue of the intentional distinction see Walter Hoeres, “Wesen und Dasein bei Heinrich von Gent und Duns Scotus,” Franziskanische Studien 47 (1965): 121–86; Martin Pickavé, Heinrich von Gent über Metaphysik als erste Wissenschaft: Studien zu einem Metaphysikentwurf aus dem letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts (Leiden: Brill, 2007),
Before moving to what Scotus thinks about the nature of powers, let me summarize Henry's view. At the center of Henry's view about powers lies the claim that powers involve aspects of relatedness of an essence to distinct acts. Starting from this claim, one can see how Henry distinguishes between created and divine powers. Both kinds of powers involve aspects of relatedness of an essence to acts, but only created powers are also linked with the privation of these acts. In contrast to Aquinas, who explains the imperfection of created powers by the limited act of being of their bearers, Henry then explains it by how divine and created powers are related to their acts: in God, His power is only rationally distinct from its act and always present with its act; in created beings, acts are accidents of things, while powers are not only distinct from their acts, but also conjoined with the privation of these acts. Moreover, while for Aquinas, powers are intrinsic to their bearers, for Henry, they are not—they depend on their bearer's essence and existence and on God's decision to allow for some acts to be instantiated in the world. Not surprisingly, Henry's view about powers being constituted of an essence and an aspect of relatedness raises a question about what kind of entity a power is. Things get complicated due to Henry's insistence that powers are the same as the essence that has them. To understand Henry's claim about the nature of power, his view about the nature of relations is relevant, for powers are constituted in the same way as relations are, namely from a foundation and a mode of being towards something else. For Henry, the mode of being towards something else or the aspect of relatedness is a feature that cannot exist without an essence, but which is, nevertheless, distinct from it, for essences can be conceived without being under any aspect of relatedness to an act and without being in any specific mode of being.

4.3. John Duns Scotus on Causal Powers

Recall that in the last chapter I argued that one major difference between Henry's view of causal powers and Scotus's view consists in their different approaches to the problem of the causal contribution of powers to an action. While Henry does not consider powers to be principles of actions,
Scotus does. Since for Scotus, powers, as principles, directly cause actions or receives passions, it is no surprise that he is appalled by Henry’s suggestion that powers are relations. Indeed, we have already seen him arguing, with little success in my opinion, against Henry that powers understood as relations are causally and explanatory irrelevant.

In the first part of this section, I return to the issue of Scotus’s criticism of the view that powers are relations. In this context, I introduce his solution that principles and powers are absolutes. In the second part, I discuss how Scotus distinguishes among powers. This is an issue for him because traditionally the relational aspect of powers is used to account for their distinction, while when Scotus maintains that powers are absolutes, he cannot use anymore this relational aspect to explain the distinction of powers. In the third part, I explain what conceptual innovations Scotus makes to defend the view that powers and principles are absolutes. In discussing these issues, I cover many if not all the problems that I tackled in relation to Aquinas’s and Henry’s views about powers.

4.3.1. Principle and Potency as Absolute Things

When Scotus rejects Henry’s view that powers are relations, he rejects three claims: (1) powers being relations can produce or receive something; (2) powers being relations can explain causal interactions; and (3) powers need to be relations because they determine an essence to an act. Since Henry is not interested in arguing that powers are causally relevant, the claims that matter to him are the second and the third. In this section, I will focus on Scotus’s arguments against the third claim, because this claim is the reason why Henry thinks powers as relations are explanatorily relevant. Scotus rejects the view that powers are determinations of an essence; instead, he claims that powers are absolute entities.

In *Ord.* I, d. 7, q. 1, Scotus engages with the claim that powers are relations because they are determinations to acts. He explains that Henry’s requirement that to principiate, an essence needs to be determined is due to Henry’s misunderstanding of what it means to be indeterminate. A passive principle such as matter is so indeterminate that it has a causal contribution to something only when it receives a form. So a passive principle needs something to determine itself. An active principle, on

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73 In section 4.2.2, I discussed one of Scotus’s arguments against the first claim, namely that the aspect of relatedness to an act, about which Henry thinks that it pertains to the account of a power, cannot make a difference to the causation of an act. In *QVM* IX, q. 5, Scotus also argues that the relation to the *principiatum* (that is, to what is principiated by a *principle*) is irrelevant in causal interactions. The reason is always the same: a relation to the *principiatum* arises after the *principiatum* exists. See Scotus, *QVM* IX, q. 5, n. 13 (OPh 4: 563). But these are not convincing arguments since Henry is not interested in arguing for the causal relevance of powers.
the other hand, is said to be indeterminate because it can produce many effects to which it cannot determine by itself. For example, the sun can make something hot, something dry, but, according to Aristotelian physics, it can also generate worms and other creatures. But this indeterminacy of an active principle is not because this principle needs to receive something to produce an effect; it is a sign that the principle can manifest together with another suitable passive principle to produce diverse effects. The sun does not need anything to be added to its nature to have these diverse effects; the diversity of effects is due both to the sun and to some suitable passive principles. Thus, Henry’s mistake is to require the same type of determination from active principles that is required from passive principles.74

Scotus’s arguments do not seem to be fatal to Henry’s view, for Scotus does not seem to understand why Henry maintains that an essence needs to be determined. For Henry, before being created, an essence does not have any power, although there are many possible acts for it. By choosing to create things with certain essences, God determines essences to some or all the acts that are possible for them. At the core of this view is the claim that there is a difference between what is possible for an essence and what an essence has the power to do. Henry’s assumption is that the sphere of possibility must always be larger than the sphere of power: God does not give creatures powers for things that have no place in his creation—those powers would be otiose. It is precisely because the sphere of possibility is larger than that of powers that an essence needs to be determined to certain acts. But Scotus’s argument against the indeterminacy of an essence does not address this issue at all. Thus, Henry can agree with Scotus’s argument and still maintain that an essence needs to be determined. This is so because once an essence is created it is determined to an act, and there is no need for further determination—except in the case of passive powers, just as Scotus mentions.75

74 See Scotus, *Ord. I*, d. 7, q. 1, n. 20 (Vat. 4: 114–15): “Contra. Indeterminatio, quaedam est ‘potentiae passivae’ et quaedam ‘potentiae activae’ illimitatae ad plures effectus (exemplum: sicut sol est indeterminatus ad producendum multa generabilia, non quod aliquam formam recipiat ut agat, sed quia habet virtutem productivam illimitatam). Quod est indeterminatum ‘indeterminatione materiae’ oportet quod recipiat formam ad hoc quod agat, quia non est in actu sufficiens ad agendum, sed quod est indeterminatum ‘indeterminatione potentiae activae’ est ex se sufficiens determinatum ad producendum quicumque illorum effectuum: et hoc si passum dispositum sit approximatum, ubi requiritur passum, vel ex se ipso ubi passum non requiritur.” There are five more arguments against Henry’s second reason.

75 One might go even further and claim that Scotus’s view is not as different from Henry’s view as Scotus wants us to believe. For example, in *Rep.* I–A, d. 7, q. 1, Scotus himself seems willing to make an important concession to Henry: “And if the formal principle of producing something is understood in this way, perhaps this opinion is in reality not at variance with the prior one, but only verbally, for I concede that the relation concurs with the essence to produce the Son, not to determine the essence which is determined of itself, but in order that the latter may come to be in proximate potency for acting, in which it can only insofar as it is an individual subject and person.” See Scotus, *Rep.* I–A, d. 7, q. 1, n. 36 in John Duns Scotus, *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I–A, Latin and English Translation*, trans. Allan Bernard Wolter and Oleg V. Bychkov (St. Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute, 2004), 314–15. Scotus suggests that when Henry requires
Despite Henry’s and Scotus’s disagreement, they share an important insight about the nature of created powers. Both agree that created powers need help to manifest themselves. For Henry, for a power to manifest, what is needed is (1) a more precise determination of it, (2) the presence of a suitable partner, and (3) the absence of impediments. For Scotus, what is needed is the presence of a suitable partner and the lack of impediments.\(^{76}\)

Let us now return to the issue of what a power is for Scotus. In \textit{QSM}, in a question dealing with the issue of whether a power is a relation, Scotus says:

\textbf{[Text 17]} It is said that nothing pertains to the account of a power except that \textit{it} is a certain absolute essence, in which a certain aspect of relatedness to what is principiated is founded, so that no such aspect of relatedness precedes in act that principiation through which it [i.e. the essence] is as if determined to principiating.\(^{77}\)

Scotus’s view about the account of a power departs in an important aspect from what Henry thinks about powers. For Henry, a power, according to its account, involves an aspect of relatedness of an act, which aspect is founded on an absolute essence; for Scotus, a power, according to its account, is \textit{just} an absolute essence, in which an aspect of relatedness is grounded.

Shouldn’t the aspect of relatedness be part of the account of a power? Indeed, Scotus does not use the word ‘just’ in \textbf{[Text 17]} and he even mentions the aspect of relatedness. Moreover, the reference to the aspect of relatedness is immediately added after the remark that a power is an essence, almost as a qualification of this remark. Once the aspect of relatedness or a relation is included in the account of what a power is, there does not seem to be any difference between Henry and Scotus.

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\textit{that an essence be determined to be able to act, he is in fact speaking about the necessity of an essence to be in proximate potency to act. If this is what Henry means, then Scotus agrees with him. In my view, Scotus overlooks Henry’s different understanding of what it means to be in proximate and remote potency. For their views on this issue, see Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} III, q. 14 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 70B–C) and Scotus, \textit{Ord.} I, d. 7, q. 1, n. 32 (Vat. 4: 119–120). In short, for Henry, being in remote potency is not what happens to an essence before it is determined—being in remote or proximate potency are descriptions of already determined essences.}\\
\textit{Ibid.: “Secundo modo est difficultas quaestionis, inquirendo quid sit illud ‘absolutum’ quod est fundamentum istius relationis. Et tunc (loquendo semper precise de potentia activa sive productiva, de qua est modo sermo) distinguo ulterius quod ‘potentia denominativa sumpta’ aliquando sumitur pro suo fundamento praecise, aliquando autem pro illo cum omnibus aliis quae concurruntur ad hoc ut possit elicere actum, quae scilicet requiruntur ad rationem potentiae propinque, – cuiusmodi sunt in creaturis approximatio passi et impedimenti remotio.”}\\
\textit{See Scotus, \textit{QSM} IX, q. 5, n. 13 (OPh 4: 563): “dicitur quod nihil est de ratione potentiae nisi absoluta aliqua essentia, in qua immediate fundatur aliquis respectus ad principiendum, ita quod nullus respectus praecedit in actu ipsum principiacionem per quam quasi determinetur ad principiandum.”}
\end{flushright}
My answer to this objection is to point out that once Scotus identifies potency with principle, he is not interested anymore in the aspect of relatedness. Let me develop this point. In the text right before [Text 17], Scotus clarifies that the understanding of potency that is at stake in the question whether potency is a relation or not is potency in the sense of principle, that is, something that is prior to what it principiates.\textsuperscript{78} For example, the question is whether potency is the essence of heat or the essence of heat together with its relation to heat. His answer is that the potency is the essence alone, for the relation requires the presence of what is principiated and so it is posterior to principiation. So, potencies understood as what actually principiates are always absolute essences, the foundations of any aspect of relatedness.\textsuperscript{79}

Recall that Scotus claims that potency and principle are the same. On the one hand, this allows him to further claim that potencies have two kinds of relations, in the same way as principles do: one relation to what is principiated and another relation to a co-principle. On the other hand, it also allows Scotus to emphasize that what pertains to the account of power is just an essence, because only the essence, and not any relations, is prior to an act. But this view suffers from an important drawback: if what pertains to the account of potency is just the essence, then it remains unexplained how an essence can principiate so many kinds of acts. Thus, what needs to be explained is how an essence has different powers or how it can act in so many ways. This is the question that I will address in the next section.

\textsuperscript{78} See Scotus, \textit{QSM} IX, q. 5, n. 12 (OPh 4: 562–63): “ideo quando quaeritur de potentia, ut est prior naturaliter principiato, necesse est quod hoc denominativum ‘potentia’ accipiatur pro subiecto quod denominat non in sensu compositionis — quia nec sic est prior — sed in sensu divisionis.” This is not the only place where Scotus makes this distinction. See the text cited in note 76. Again, against Henry, Scotus makes the same point in \textit{Rep.} II-A, d. 16, q. un., Oxford Merton, MS 61, fol. 179r: “Sed illud non solvit quaestionem quia non quaeratur de potentia ut dicit respectum seu per intentionem nominis sicut de principio per se et immediato.” (On the different versions of the \textit{Reportationes} see also note 82 below.) See also Thomas Aquinas, \textit{De potentia} q. 2, art. 2, corp. (Pession: 28): “Quidam enim dixerunt, quod potentia generandi in divinis dicitur tantum ad aliquid: et movebantur hac ratione: quia potentia secundum suam rationem est principium quoddam; principium autem relative dicitur et est notionale, si referatur ad divinam potentiam et non ad creaturas. Sed in hac ratione videntur fuisse decepti propere duo: primo, quia licet potentiae conveniat ratio principii, quod in genere relationis est, tamen id quod est principium actionis vel passionis, non est relatio, sed aliqua forma absoluta; et id est essentia potentiae; et inde est quod philosophus ponit potentiam non in genere relationis, sed qualitatis, sicut et scientiam, quamvis utrique aliqua relatio accidat.”

\textsuperscript{79} Moreover, immediately after [Text 17], Scotus inquires more into the nature of the aspect of relatedness, not to show that it should pertain to what a potency as a principle is, but to show that there is no need to think that this aspect plays a role in principiation. Those who take it that being related to what is principiated is part of the account of what a power is also think that this relation is naturally prior to the relation to the principatum and even grounds it. But Scotus points out that both ‘potency’ (or ‘principle’) and ‘principiation’ signify the relation of principiation: the relation must be the same because it has the same foundation and terminus (recall here Scotus’s discussion about paronymy from the previous chapter). Thus, since the relations signified by ‘potency’ and by ‘principiation’ are the same, one cannot be prior to the other. So, the relation that is signified by the term ‘potency’ cannot be part of the account of what a power is since principiation is posterior to the power. See Scotus, \textit{QSM} IX, q. 5, n. 14 (OPh 4: 563–64).
4.3.2. The Distinction of Powers

Scotus briefly engages with the problem of the distinction of powers in QSM IX, q. 5 and, in a more detailed way in Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un. In QSM IX, q. 5, he concludes the rejection of Henry’s view by saying:

[Text 18] And then, maintaining that powers are the same as the essence, either they differ precisely as distinct perfectional accounts that are univitively contained [in the essence] […] or they do not differ in any way really [from the essence], but only intentionally or rationally. But neither does this [last] difference, since is completed in the intellect, and not in reality, unless potentially, naturally precede the differentiation of acts.80

If a power is just the essence, then how can the same essence have distinct powers? Let us leave aside for the moment Scotus’s cryptic remarks about powers being distinct as perfections that are univitively contained in the essence. In [Text 18], Scotus acknowledges that there might be a distinction between potency/powers and essence. However, in his opinion, this distinction cannot be understood in the way Henry does,81 namely, by positing that powers are relations to acts. For Scotus, the distinction of powers precedes the different kinds of act that an essence can have instead of being caused by the existence of different acts. For example, heat’s distinctive powers of heating, melting, drying, etc. are due to heat’s essence, not to the acts it can cause. Thus, [Text 18] presents the following picture: Scotus is open to accepting that there is a distinction between powers and essences but not to accepting that this distinction is in terms of a relation to an act; thus, he rejects the view that powers need to be distinguished because of their acts.

80 See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 5, n. 18 (OPh 4: 565): “Et tunc, tenendo quod potentiae sint idem cum essentia vel differunt praecise sicut diversae rationes perfectionales in codem unitive contentae […]; vel nullo modo realiter differenter, sed tantum intentione vel ratione — sed nec talis differentia, cum sit compleitive in intellectu, et non in re nisi in potentia, praecedit naturaliter differentiam actuum.”

81 [Text 18] gives the impression that Scotus takes Henry’s view about powers to be motivated by the desire to show how powers are distinguished among themselves, namely by being related to different acts. In my opinion, Scotus again misses the point of Henry’s view about powers as determinations or relations to acts. It is true that as determinations of essences, powers are intentionally distinct from the essence, they are modes of the essence. However, the main drive behind Henry’s view is not to explain through the intentional or modal distinction of powers from the essence the distinction among powers, but to defend a certain view about powers, one in which the essences of created beings are not the complete account of their action: what is a power for an essence also depends on things outside the essence. It seems to be more of a bonus than an intended consequence of his view that once Henry understands powers as determinations, he also has a way of distinguishing among them.
In Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un., 82 after engaging with three views about the ontological status of powers, 83 Scotus offers two answers to the question concerning the nature of the powers of the soul and their relation to the soul. 84 I will start with the first answer. This answer posits the identity thesis: 85 powers are the same as the essence of the soul, that is, there is no real or formal distinction between the soul and its powers or between the powers themselves. Scotus’s argument for the identity thesis is that there are no good general considerations about paucity, impossibility, and lack of nobility to say otherwise. The identity thesis does not posit more entities than necessary; nor does it posit an impossibility, nor does it debase the nature of an essence or power. Precisely because of these considerations, theologians agree that in God, powers must be the same as the essence. But Scotus adds that there are good arguments to show that powers are identical to the essence in creatures too.

82 There are several works that can be found under the title Reportationes, and thus several versions of distinction 16. See Barnaba Hechich, “Il problema delle ‘reportationes’ nell’eredità dottrinale del B. Giovanni Duns Scoto, OFM,” in Giovanni Duns Scoto: Studi e ricerche nel VII Centenario della sua morte in onore di P. César Alarcón, ed. Martín Carbajo Núñez (Rome: Antonianum, 2008), 59–128. In what follows I use the text identified as Rep. II-A from the manuscript Oxford Merton MS 61. This text seems to be very close to the one printed in volume 23 of the Vivès edition. I also checked the text of another version of same quæstion, a version that is printed in volume 13 of the Vivès edition. This text seems to be closer (although there are differences) to the text contained in the manuscript Orléans, Médiathèque municipale d’Orléans, comun. 4 F 146, which text is identified as Rep. II-B.

83 The first view (which can be attributed to Aquinas) posits that the powers are really distinct among themselves and from the soul because the powers are accidents of a substance. See Scotus Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un., Oxford Merton, MS 61, fol. 178r. The second view that powers are really distinct among themselves, but not really distinct from the soul. Here Scotus mentions the view of Bonaventure that powers are parts of the soul. (ibid., fol 179r). Lastly, Scotus introduces a third view, namely that powers are distinct only through a relative thing but are the same as the soul, a view that is attributed to Henry of Ghent. (ibid.) It is not clear how Scotus sees the relation between Henry’s view and the previous two views, given the fact that at the beginning of the question he mentions that there are only two views on the ontological status of the powers of the soul. The question is whether (1) Henry’s view is this second view, and so Bonaventure’s view goes together with Aquinas’s view as being versions of the same one view that posits powers to be really distinct among their own selves, or (2) Henry’s view is just a version of the same view that Bonaventure defends, namely that powers are the same as the soul.

84 There are some differences between Rep. II-A and B, both in how Scotus presents other views (for example, in how he presents the views of Bonaventure and Henry) and in Scotus’s own reply (to counterarguments or to the whole question). In Rep. II-B, Scotus starts with the suggestion that the powers are neither really distinct among themselves nor really distinct from the soul. See John Duns Scotus, “Reportatio Parisiensis (= Rep. II-B)” Orléans, Médiathèque municipale d’Orléans, comun. 4 F 146, fol. 41rb: “Dico quod potentiae non distinguntur realiter nec a se nec ab essentia animae. [Responsio eius est ista] Illud ponendum est in natura quod melius est si sit possibile. Illud patet 2 de generatione. Sed paucitas sine multitudine est melior in natura si sit possibilis. Hoc dicit Aristoteles primo Physicorum. Ergo si posuit esse actus diversi ab una essentia simplici animae sine distinctione reali.” In Rep. II-A, he starts with the suggestion that the soul is the immediate principle of its operations, and only after presenting a few arguments for this view, he says: “Dico ergo quod intellectus et voluntas non sunt res realiter distincte, sed potest sustineri quod sunt omnino idem re et ratione vel quod esse anime omnino indistincta re et ratione est principium plurium operationum sine diversitate reali potentiarum quod sint vel partes anime vel accidentia vel respectus eius. Unde plura in effectu bene possunt esse ab uno in re quod est omnino idem.” See Scotus Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un., Oxford Merton MS 61, fol. 179r.

85 Dominik Perler uses this label for this view, which was also defended by William of Auvergne and William of Ockham. See Perler, “Faculties in Medieval Philosophy.” On issues related to the identity thesis see also Peter King, “The Inner Cathedral: Mental Architecture in High Scholasticism,” Vivarium 46, no. 3 (2008): 253–274.
For example, positing powers as intermediaries between the soul and its operations raises problems for where the operations are received: if the powers are principles of operations, but really distinct from the soul, the operations would be received in the powers, not in the soul. But being accidents of the soul, these powers can be detached from the soul. If the act of enjoyment of seeing God is received in the power alone but the power can be detached from the soul, how can a person be beatified? Furthermore, entities that are less noble than the soul, for example, the active qualities, are the same as their powers. But if philosophers accept this in the case of some accidents, why do they deny this to the soul, which is nobler than the active qualities? Scotus concludes with the claim that reason cannot disprove the identity thesis.

Let us return now to the second answer that Scotus offers in Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un. This answer is precisely the alternative that he does not reject in [Text 18]: powers are distinct from the essence as distinct perfectional accounts that are unitively contained in it. This answer is introduced as being more plausible than the identity thesis because it agrees with certain authoritative claims. More specifically, the answer successfully incorporates three claims, namely that (1) the powers of the soul flow from the soul—a claim he attributes to the Commentator (i.e. Michael of Ephesus) on Book

86 See Scotus, Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un., Oxford Merton, MS 61, fol. 179v: “Item illa non est operatio propria alicuius quae non recipitur immediate in ipso. Sed si intellectus et voluntas sunt aliiu ab essentia videre deum et diligere non immediate recipiuntur in essentia animae, immo nec per se quia si iste potentiae essent separatae ab essentia anime sicut quantitas a subiecto, posset intellectus adhuc perfici visione beata et sic accidens esset formaliter beatum et non solum creatura rationalis. Ergo esto quod essentia animae et istae potentiae coniungantur, tantum erit anima beata per accidens sicut pariens albus per superficies. Ista ergo mediatio multam ignobilitat naturam. Non autem est simile de operatione quia contradictio est animam esse beatam et non operationem.”

87 Ibid.: “Item actus inferior anima rationali potest esse immediatum principium operandi, alter esset processus in infinitum, ergo illud non repugnat animae quia non ratione perfectionis sue cum conveniat imperfectiori nec propter hoc esset imperfectionis in anima quia convenit perfectioni ut Deo.” Some of the arguments for the identity thesis in the case of created beings are the same as the ones that Henry uses in Quodl. III, q. 14 against the Thomistic position. For example, the argument about the active qualities in the form from Rep. II-B is closer to Henry’s text than the one from Rep. II-A. See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. III, q. 14 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 66vP–Q).

88 See Scotus, Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un., Oxford Merton, MS 61, fol. 179v: “Ista via per rationem improbari non potest quia sicut prima causa quae est simpliciter illimitata omnino cadem re et ratione est principium diversorum immediate, ita quod est illimitatum suo modo, licet non simpliciter respectu illorum omnino idem re et ratione potest esse quamquam producta sunt diversa.” Usually we think about powers as intrinsic properties of something. Are powers understood in the sense of the identity thesis intrinsic properties of the essence? The answer, I think, is no. First, on the identity theory, powers are no longer properties—they are the essence, and the essence is not a property. Second, powers are not possessed in virtue of what things are; they are what things are, because the essence is what a thing is. This rules them out as being intrinsic properties if one understands intrinsic in the following way: a property is intrinsic to a iff a has it in virtue of what a is. On the intuitive understanding of intrinsic properties (a property is intrinsic if a thing has it independently of anything that happens outside itself), powers also seem not to be intrinsic for they are not possessed—they are the essence of the soul.
X of *Nicomachean Ethics*,\(^8^9\) that (2) these powers are in between the substantial and accidental forms—a claim he attributes to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and that (3) the powers are parts of the soul—a claim that he previously attributed to Bonaventure.\(^9^0\)

The clearest motivation for the second answer appears not in *Rep*. II-A, d. 16, q. un., but in *Rep*. I-A, d. 33:

**[Text 19]** For although the powers of soul are identical to the essence of the soul, no [particular] faculty is precisely and adequately of itself the whole of the soul, for then, just as one power is rooted in the essence of the soul, so it could be rooted in another power. Therefore, a [particular] faculty does assert a virtual perfection of the soul and it is virtually the same as the soul, but not adequately and precisely the same as it—and it is the same way with the parts of a composite as regards the composite as a whole. Therefore, the faculties or parts can be multiplied while the essence of the soul remains one and one single whole.\(^9^1\)

In **[Text 19]** Scotus argues that the identity thesis cannot make sense of the kind of relations that exist among the powers of the soul. For example, if the will and the intellect were the same as the soul (in any respect), then the will would be founded upon the intellect and the intellect will be founded upon the will. But between the will and the intellect there are important differences: by its nature, for the will to manifest its power an act of understanding must be present in the intellect. Thus, the identity thesis cannot allow for the will’s activity to essentially depend on the activity of the intellect.\(^9^2\)

Another shortcoming of the identity thesis appears when considering the soul’s relation to its powers. In **[Text 19]**, Scotus says that none of the powers can be precisely and adequately the same as the soul. He distinguishes between two kinds of non-adequacy. On the one hand, something is not adequately identical to another item in predication. For example, animal is predicated of more beings

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\(^{8^9}\) Ibid., fol. 180r: “Et sic possunt auctoritates salvari quae videntur dicere quod distinguuntur realiter, verum est formaliter. Et sic dicuntur potentiae ebullire ab esse animae secundum Commentatorem X Ethicorum et effluere ab esse secundum comenum opinionem.”


\(^{9^2}\) On the issue of the relation of the intellect and the will see chapter 6, section 6.2.2.
than human beings, so animal and human being are not adequately identical in predication. On the other hand, something is not adequately identical to another item in perfection and power. For example, the nature of human beings is more perfect and has more powers than the nature of animals. This second sense of non-adequacy is useful for understanding the relation of the soul and its powers: the soul is more perfect and has more powers than any of its powers.

While the soul is distinct from its powers, the powers are also distinct among each other. This can be seen by focusing again on the case of the will and the intellect. The will essentially depends for its activity on the intellect in virtue of their formal accounts (rationes formales): by its nature, the will requires for its activity the prior activity of the intellect, but not the other way around. Note that the distinction in nature or account is not a purely conceptual distinction, for it has a foundation in reality: were the distinction between the will and intellect purely conceptual, then there would be hardly any explanation for the essential dependence of the will’s activity on the intellect. Scotus further adds that although the accounts of these powers are distinct, their distinction should be understood as formal

93 See Scotus, Rep. I-A, d. 33, q. 2, n. 66 (Wolter and Bychkov: 331): “Excessus autem vel non-adequatio unius ad alterum potest intelligi dupliciter: vel secundum praedicationem et non-convertibilitatem, ut se habent animal et homo secundum praedicationem non-adequate, quia animal dicitur de pluribus quam homo; alio modo secundum virtutem et perfectionem, ut homo qua animal vel forma quam materia.”

94 See Scotus, Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un., Oxford Merton, MS 61, fol. 180r: “Ideo non sunt potentiae idem formaliter vel quiditativae nec inter se nec esse essentiae animae, nec tamen sunt res aliae, sed idem ydemptitate. Ideo talia habent talem distinctionem secundum rationes formales qualem haberen realem distinctionem si essent res alie realiter distintae.” For more on the issue of the formal distinction see Hester Goedenough Gelber, “Logic and the Trinity: A Clash of Values in Scholastic Thought, 1300-1335” (doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1974), 71–102; Adams, William Ockham vol. I, 22-29; Stephen D. Dumont, “Duns Scotus’s Parisian Question on the Formal Distinction,” Vivarium 43, no. 1 (2005): 7–62. For the newly edited text of the so-called Logica Scoti see Kent Emery and Garrett R. Smith, “The Quaestio de Formalitatibus” by John Duns Scotus, Sometimes Called the Logica Scoti,” Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale 56 (2015): 91–182. One issue in the secondary literature is that Scotus seems to have maintained two views about the formal distinction. One view appears in Lect. I, d. 2, p. 2, qq. 1–4, n. 275 (Vat. 16: 216–17). There he says that in the same one thing, there can be non-identical realities or formalities. The other view appears in Rep. I-A, d. 33, q. 2, nn. 60–61 (Wolter and Bychkov: 328–29). There he says that between the divine essence and the personal properties there is formal non-identity or a secondum quid non-identity. The difference consists that in Rep. the non-identity is qualified (it is formal instead of simple) and one cannot deduce from the formal non-identity between the essence and the personal property that the essence and the property are distinct formalities. The reason for Scotus’ caution is that the essence being infinite is identical to anything that it is compatible with (including the property). In my discussion of the distinction of the will and the intellect I tried to avoid this controversy. It seems to me that Scotus’s vocabulary in Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un is closer to that of Rep. I-A, d. 33, q. 2, (given his expression “si essent res alie realiter distinctae”, an expression he also uses in Rep. I-A, d. 33, q. 2 when discussing the distinction between the essence and the personal property). However, note two issues. First, the argument for formal non-identity is based on the infinity of the divine essence; one cannot make a similar argument in the case of the will and intellect as in the case of the powers of the soul. Second, one issue for which one might think that the differences between the two views is relevant is the issue of the causal contribution of the will and the intellect. It seems that it is more problematic to understand the causality of the powers if they are not formalities. However, note that both in the Lectura and in Rep. I-A, d. 33, q. 2, Scotus agrees that the formalities and, respectively, what are formally non-identical need to be actual, formal, proper, and determinate (not potential, virtual, or confused). Moreover, it is the essence that is a power, not the formalities.
non-identity (non-identitas formalis). This means that neither the account of the will pertains essentially and primarily to the account of the intellect, nor the other way around. Indeed, one item is formally identical to another only when the one that is said to be identical to the other contains in its account, primarily and essentially, the account of the other.

Although the will and the intellect do not contain in their accounts the account of the other, they are nevertheless contained in the (account of the) soul. In fact, it is their containment in the soul that makes it possible to say that they are formally non-identical. But how are the intellect and the will contained in the soul so that they are formally non-identical? To answer this question, we need to return to the notion of ‘unitive containment’, a notion that that Scotus uses in [Text 18] and in Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un., to explain how the soul contains its powers.

There are two possible ways in which something is unitively contained in something else. In one case, what is inferior unitively contains what is superior to it. For example, in the account of whiteness there are unitively contained both its genus and its specific difference. In this sense, what is unitively contained pertains to the essence of the whole. In another sense, an item unitively contains another one although the latter does not pertain to the essence of the former. Scotus compares the second sense of unitive containment with how transcendentals such as good, one, and true are contained in being. In Metaphysics IV.2, 1004b10–17, Aristotle talks about some features that pertain to being qua being. In medieval philosophy, these features were called transcendentals, because they apply to being before being is distinguished into genus and species, that is, these features transcend the categories. Because Scotus maintains that being applies univocally to both God and created being,

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95 Scotus, Rep. I-A, d. 33, q. 2, n. 63 (Wolter and Bychkov: 330): “Dicuntur autem aliqua non habere identitatem formalem quando unum non est de per se et primo intellectu alterius (ut definitio vel partes definitionis sunt de intellectu definiti), sed quando neutrum includitur in ratione formali alterius, licet tamen sint eadem realiter.”

96 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 2, pars 2, q. 4, n. 403 (Vat. 2: 356–57): “Voco autem identitatem formalen, ubi illud quod dicitur sic idem, includit illud cui sic est idem, in ratione sua formali quiditativa et per se primo modo.” The terms ‘primarily’ and ‘essentially’ refers to predication per se primo. Recall that something is predicated primarily when it is said about something immediately, and not in virtue of something else; something is said essentially of something else when it is said in virtue of what that thing is. For example, what is defined (man) is formally the same as the definition (rational animal). Although this example might imply that formal identity is always a symmetrical relation, this is not the case. For a case in which formal identity is not a symmetrical relation see Rep. I-A, d. 34, q. 1, n. 90.

97 See Scotus, Rep. II-A, d. 16, q. un., Oxford Merton, MS 61, fol. 180r: Est ergo continentia unitiva duplex. Uno modo sicut inferior continet superioria essentialia et ibi contenta sunt de esse continetis, sicut eadem est realitas a quia accipitur differentia in albedine et a qua genus proximum ut color et qualitas sensibilis et qualitas. Et quaquam essent res aliae unitivae continentur in albedine. Alia est continentia unitiva quando subiectum unitive continet aliqua quae sunt quasi passiones sicut passiones entis non sunt res alia ab ente quia quaecumque detur ipsa res est ens vera et bona, ergo vel oportet dicere quod non sunt res aliae ab ente, vel quod ens non habet passiones reales quod est contra Aristoteles 4 Metaphysice expresse. Nec tamen magis sunt tales passiones de essentia nec idem quiditatem quam si essent res alia.”
he works with a slightly different concept of transcendentals than other medieval philosophers who are not committed to the concept of univocal being. Thus, when he says that transcendentals apply to being before it is distinguished into genus and species, he means that they apply to being as it encompasses both being as it is indifferent to finite and infinite determinations and the most perfect being.\footnote{See Scotus, \textit{Ord.} I, d. 8, pars 1, q. 3, n. 113 (Vat. 4: 206): “Ergo quaecumque conveniunt enti ut indifferentes ad finitum et infinitum, vel ut est proprium enti infinito, conveniunt sibi nun ut determinatur ad genus sed ut prius, et per consequens ut est transcendens et est extra omne genus.” On Scotus’s view of transcendentals and univocity of being see Allan B. Wolter, \textit{The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus} (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1946); Aertsen, “Being and One”; Dumont, “Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus”; King, “Scotus on Metaphysics.”} The transcendentals are contained in being as its passions. A passion is predicated \textit{per se secundo modo} of its subject, in this case, of being. To be predicated \textit{per se secundo modo} means to be predicated not as something essential, but as something that only necessarily pertains to a subject. For example, rationality is predicated \textit{per se primo modo}, that is, as something that essentially pertains to human beings, while the capacity for laughing is predicated only \textit{per se secundo modo}, that is as something that necessarily pertains to human beings.\footnote{See Scotus, \textit{Ord.} I, d. 3, pars 1, q. 3, n. 134 (Vat. 3: 83): “Secundum, videlicet propositum de passionibus entis, probo dupliciter. Primo sic: passio ‘per se secundo modo’ praedicatur de subiecto, \textit{I Posteriorum}, - ergo subiectum ponitur in definitione passionis sicut additum, ex eodem I, et VII \textit{Metaphysicae}. Enst ergo in ratione suae passionis cadit ut additum. Habet enim passiones proprias, ut patet per Philosophum IV \textit{Metaphysicae} cap. 3, ubi vult quod sicut linea in quantum linea habet passiones, et numerus in quantum numerus, ita sunt aliquae passiones entis in quantum ens: sed ens cadit in ratione eorum ut additum, - ergo non est ‘per se primo modo’ in ratione quiditativa eorum. - Hoc etiam confirmatur per Philosophum I Posteriorium, ‘De statu principiorum’, ubi vult quod ‘praedicationes per se’ non convertuntur, quia si praedicatum dicatur de subiecto, per se, non est e converso ‘per se’ sed per accidents. Igitur si ista est per se secundo modo ‘ens est unum’, haec ‘unum est ens’ non est per se primo modo sed quasi per accidents, sicut ista ‘risibile est homo’.’ If a \textit{proprium} pertains \textit{per se secundo modo} to its subject, that is, it is necessary for the subject, the subject pertains as if accidentally to the \textit{proprium}. This is so because the subject is not essential for the account of the \textit{proprium}. Moreover, the \textit{proprium} is a kind of accident, and so it does not have a definition properly speaking. Following Aristotle, Scotus says that being pertains to the account of the transcendentals only as an addition.} As passions of being, transcendentals are necessary features of being, not essential ones, so they do not pertain to the formal understanding of being:\footnote{See Scotus, \textit{Rep.} I-A, d. 33, q. 2, n. 63 (Wolter and Bychkov: 330): “sicut ens et unum dicuntur eadem IV \textit{Metaphysicae}; formalis enim ratio entis non est de per se intellectu unius, cum unum sit passio entis, et passio non sit de intellectu formalis suubiecti, et tamen sunt eadem realiter, ut probat ibi Philosophus et Commentator.”} if being were to have a definition, in the same way as color has a definition, the transcendentals would not pertain to the definition of being because they are not essential to being. But at the same time, transcendentals are the same in reality as being—they do not add any thing above being. It makes sense to think that something that is essential to something else is the same as the latter, but since transcendentals are not essential to being, why are they really identical to being? As Scotus says in Rep. II A, d. 1, q. 6, no matter how much one tries to separate them from being, the transcendentals are still to be found in...
what is left. Although not essential, transcendentals cannot be detached from being, and so they share the same reality as being. Because they are not essential to being, but are nevertheless really the same as being, transcendentals are like a kind of accident, in the sense of accident that Scotus uses in \textit{QSM IV}, q. 2, where, following Avicenna, he defines as an accident anything that is outside the \textit{per se} understanding of an essence. Given how transcendentals are unitively contained in being, one item \textit{A} is unitively contained in another item \textit{B} if \textit{A} does not pertain to the formal concept of \textit{B}, that is, if it does not pertain to \textit{B}'s definition or is not an essential part of \textit{B}, but is nevertheless the same in reality as it.

This understanding of unitive containment is relevant for how the powers of the souls such as the intellect and the will are contained in the soul: these powers are the same in reality as the soul, although they do not pertain to the formal account of the soul. In \textit{Rep. II-A}, d. 16, q. un., we find evidence for this view. Scotus explains that the will and intellect are immediate to the soul only in a second moment of nature, which means that the powers of the soul are posterior in nature to the essence of the soul. Because they are posterior to the essence, and so to speak, consequences of it, they cannot be strictly speaking \textit{essential} parts of the soul, although they are parts of it. Moreover, the powers are considered almost as the passions (\textit{quasi passiones}) of the soul, that is, they are related to the soul as the \textit{passiones entis} are related to being, namely as necessary features of the soul.

How many of these claims about the intellect and the will can be generalized to all powers?

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104 See Scotus, \textit{Opus Oxoniense (=Op. Ocx.) II}, d. 16, q. un., n. 18 in John Duns Scotus, \textit{Opera Omnia: Editio nova iucta editionem Waddingt XII tomos continentem}, ed. Ludovicus Vivès, 13 (Paris: Apud Ludovicum Vivès, 1893), 43: “Sic ergo possimus accipere de intellectu et voluntate, quae non sunt essentiales animae, sed sunt unitiae contenta in anima quasi passiones eius.” Note, however, that this text does not appear either in \textit{Rep. II-A} (contained in the manuscript Oxford Merton, MS 61) or in \textit{Rep. II-B} (contained in manuscript Orléans, commun. 4 F 146). Richard Cross says about the powers of the soul that they are “something like essential properties of the soul.” See Cross, \textit{The Physics of Duns Scotus}, 70. I think this claim is incorrect, for the powers are not like essential properties. They are not essential parts of the soul—Scotus says that they are parts, but to my knowledge he does not say that they are essential parts. If by essential properties Cross means necessary properties such as the \textit{propria}, the powers of the soul are not \textit{propria}. (In another text, Cross incorrectly claims that a paradigm case of unitive containment is how the \textit{propria} are contained in the substance. But the case that Scotus uses as an example is not of how substance contains the \textit{propria}, but how being contains the \textit{passiones entis}, which is a different case. (See Cross, “Accidents, Substantial Forms, and Causal Powers,” 143.) I think that we need to take Scotus seriously when he says that they are like \textit{passiones (entis).} In the next subsection, I will show what happens when we do that.
One can safely assume, based on [Text 18] that powers are the same in reality as their bearers, although they are not essential parts of them. In fact, powers are unitively contained in the essence of their bearers. But Scotus also says of the intellect and will that although they are not distinct in virtue of different aspects of relatedness to different acts, they are distinct according to their accounts—that is, there is no explanation of their distinction other than the fact that they have distinct accounts. Should we infer from this that powers other than the intellect and the will are always distinct in account from each other? The obvious answer would be to say that powers must be so distinct, for if they are not distinct in virtue of different aspects of relatedness, how can they be distinct other than by having distinct accounts? I will return to this question in the next section.

Let me make a remark that will put us in the right context for understanding how Scotus thinks about the distinction of powers other than the intellect and the will. Like Aquinas, but in contrast to Henry, Scotus maintains that powers necessarily follow from the essence of the soul. This might seem to make powers necessary accidents of the soul, in the same way as Aquinas in [Text 3] considers powers to be necessary accidents of the soul. But this similarity is superficial. One important difference between Scotus and Aquinas concerns the category in which powers fall. While Aquinas maintains that powers are necessary qualities that follow from the essence of the soul, Scotus emphatically denies that powers are qualities. For example, in _Quaestiones super Praedicamenta_, q. 32, he says that power does not refer to something that is essentially a quality. Furthermore, he explains that the reason why power is traditionally posited in the category of quality is because power acts as a principle of an operation in the same way that an absolute quality acts as a principle of an operation. In _Rep._ II-A, d. 16, q. un., Scotus says that the powers that Aristotle discusses in the _Categories_ are in fact habits, that is, principles for acting with ease.

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105 See Scotus, _Quaestiones super Praedicamenta_, q. 32, n. 49 (OPh 1: 486): “Ad aliam quaestionem dico quod potentia vel impotentia non significant aliqua quae essentialiter sunt in genere qualitatis. Sed tamen significat modum qualitatis absolute, secundum quod est principium operationis.”

The major difference between Aquinas and Scotus is that power is a transcendental. Recall Simplicius’s [Text 1]. This text makes two claims that Scotus also makes. First, it denies that power falls only in the category of quality. Simplicius remarks that qualities are indeed powers, but not all powers are qualities. Secondly, and more interestingly, it suggests that power needs to be treated as a transcendental. It is not being insofar as it falls in one of the ten categories that it is a power: it is being insofar as it is being that is a power. We saw Scotus embracing the first suggestion. In the next section I will argue that Scotus embraces also the second. Once we understand this aspect of his view, we will be able to understand better how powers are distinct while being univitively contained in the soul.

4.3.3. Power as Pure Perfection

In [Text 18], Scotus discusses how although powers are the same as the essence, they differ from it because they are “distinct perfectional accounts that are univitively contained” in the essence. In the last section, I explained that for a power $A$ to be univitively contained in an essence $B$, it means that $A$ is the same in reality as $B$, but it is not one of $B$’s essential features, nor one of its essential parts—powers are not contained in the formal account of an essence. In fact, powers are only necessary features of an essence. If this is correct, then in what sense are the powers contained in an essence? For example, in what sense are the powers of the soul parts of the soul? The question is relevant for Scotus since one of the reasons why he preferred the idea that the powers of the soul are univitively contained in the soul was because it agreed with the view that powers are parts of the soul. Moreover, when Scotus explains how the transcendentals are univitively contained in being, one can see why they are the same as being—they cannot be detached from being. But given that powers are necessary features of an essence, it is not clear how they are the same as the essence. The two issues—how the powers are parts of the essence and how they are the same as the essence—are connected, for one can argue that at the core of the idea of unitive containment is not only the aspect of being a necessary feature of an essence but also the aspect of being the same as the essence and a part of it. In this section, I want to address these two issues by considering how the will and the intellect are said to be pure perfections and so univitively contained in the soul. Once these issues are clarified, it is easy to see what general conclusions one can draw from this regarding powers in general.

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107 Both Peter King and Richard Cross distinguish the view of Aquinas from that of Scotus in terms of the intentional distinction and the rejection of the thesis that powers are qualities. In my interpretation, these points on which Scotus and Aquinas differ are related to Scotus considering power a pure perfection. See King, “The Inner Cathedral,” 267–68; Cross, “Accidents, Substantial Forms, and Causal Powers,” 143.
In *Ord.* I, d. 8, Scotus makes the following remarks about the limited perfections of created things:

[Text 20] [N]o created being is perfectly simple, so that it is not composed or composable in a certain way. And in what way it is composed, I explain as follows: it has being with the privation of a certain grade of being; no creature has being according to the entire perfection that is suitable to pertain to being in itself, and so it lacks a certain perfection, which is suitable to pertain to being in itself, and so it is deprived, in the same way in which a mole is said to be blind, 'because according to its account as an animal, it is suitable to have sight'. [...] Therefore, it is composed not from a thing and a thing, but from a positive thing and a privation, that is from a certain being that it has, and from the lack of a certain degree of perfection of being of which it itself is not capable, but of which being itself is capable: in the same way in which a mole, according to itself is not able to see, but according to its being an animal, it can see. 

Any created being insofar as it is being is in principle capable of having any of the perfections that pertain to being. Moreover, the perfections that being has are in principle able to be infinite—this is so because these perfections will apply not only to finite but also to infinite being. So any creature insofar as it is being is in principle able to have all the perfections that pertains to being in an infinite degree. But in reality creatures do not have any of the perfections in an infinite degree. Moreover, most of them do not even have all the perfections that being can have.

What are the perfections that pertain to being and are in principle possible for a created being? Scotus discusses these perfections under the label of ‘pure perfections’. He says that “a pure perfection is that which, in anything having it, it is better to have it than to have what is not it.” By this definition, many features would be pure perfections, simply in virtue of being positive features. But not any positive feature is a pure perfection, so Scotus adds that “a pure perfection is in anything

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108 See Scotus, *Ord.* I, d. 8, q. 2, n. 32 (Vat. 4: 165–66): “nulla creatura est perfecte simplex, quia aliquo modo composita est et componibilibis. Quomodo composita, declaro sic, quia habitentem cum privatione aliquidus gradus entitatis. Nulla enim creatura habitentem secundum totam perfectionem quae nata est esse entitatis in se, et ideo caret aliqua perfectione quae nata est competere entitati in se, et ideo ‘privatur’, sicut talpa dictur caeca ‘quia nata est habere visum secundum rationem animalis, non secundum rationem talpae’. […] Componitur ergo non ex re et re positivis, sed ex re positiva et privatione, sicut ex entitate aliqua quam habet, et carentia aliquidus gradus perfectionis entitatis, - cuius ipsum non est capax, tamen ipsum ens est capax: sicut talpa secundum se non est nata videre, tamen secundum quod animal, nata est videre.”

better than whatever is incompatible with it,” where what is incompatible with it can also be a positive feature. This second criterion allows for some positive features to be eliminated from the list of pure perfections. But although the test for pure perfections now eliminates some positive features, it also eliminates some perfections that seem to be pure perfections. For example, on these two criteria alone, wisdom would turn out not to be a pure perfection, because if a dog were to receive wisdom, it would be worse than it is without wisdom—in fact, a wise dog would not be able to exist at all. Thus, to prevent this kind of outcome, Scotus adds a third criterion, namely that ‘in anything’ refers not to a thing of a certain nature, but simply to something that can exist by itself, not considering at all what kind of thing it is. Although wisdom is not a perfection of dog, it is a pure perfection when we think of a being, not considering at all its nature.

An important point about pure perfections is that a pure perfection is not a perfection only because it is a perfection in God: a pure perfection is something that is a perfection in itself—therefore, one attributes it to God. Because of this, a pure perfection needs to be such that it can be attributed to God, but at the same time it can also be found in creatures. Because a pure perfection needs to be attributed to both God and creatures, pure perfections must have the same account in creatures as in God. If perfections do not have the same account in both, then it is unclear how we can speak of the same perfection. Thus, for the concept of pure perfection to work, this concept, insofar as it applies to both God and created beings, must be univocal, that is, it must be said of God and creatures according to a common account.

Will and intellect are pure perfections. Scotus explains how we would get to this view. We start from the notion of will and intellect as they are in us. We experience differently the acts of understanding and of volition, for these acts are in our power in different ways: we are not free with respect to acts of understanding, but we are free with respect of acts of volitions. But the same one thing, our soul, without any distinction in it, cannot be the principle of both these kinds of act. Thus, from this and from having these two distinct experiences, we posit a distinction in the soul: we

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110 See Scotus, Quodl. q. 5, n. 13 (Alluntis and Wolter: 119).
111 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 3, pars 1, qq. 1–2, n. 38 (Vat. 3: 25): “aut aliqua ‘perfectio simpliciter’ habet rationem communem Deo et creaturae, et habetur propositum, aut non sed tantum propriam creaturae, et tunc ratio eius non conveniet formaliter Deo quod est inconveniens; aut habet rationem omnino propriam Deo, et tunc sequitur quod nihil attribuendum est Deo, quia est ‘perfectio simpliciter’, nam hoc nihil aliud est dicere nisi quod ratio eius ut convenit Deo dicit ‘perfectionem simpliciter, ideo ipsum ponitur in Deo’.”
112 On the will as a pure perfection see Hoeres, Der Wille als reine Vollkommenheit.
distinguish between an aspect on account of which we have acts of understanding, namely the intellect, and another aspect on account of which we have acts of volitions, namely the will. Once we arrive at the concepts of these two distinct aspects, the will and the intellect, we remove from them any imperfection that is associated with them being powers of limited beings, namely of human souls. Once these imperfections are removed, we get to the univocal concepts of will and intellect as pure perfections, namely two concepts, which, in virtue of their account, can be said both of us and of God, are better to have than not to have and are better than whatever might be incompatible with them. But recall that the univocal concepts of will and intellect can be attributed to something before the concepts of finite and infinite are applied to that thing. Once they are attributed to God and human beings, the will and intellect in God are infinite will and intellect (they are attributed to God in the highest degree of their perfection), while the will and intellect in created beings are finite will and intellect. The univocal concepts of will and intellect, before becoming finite/limited or infinite/unlimited, are pure perfections.


115 One might wonder what kind of distinction there is between divine and created intellect and will. Will and intellect are transcendentals, but they are finite in created beings and infinite in divine being. The will and intellect in finite beings are distinct from the divine will and intellect. Contemporary authors have argued that because the will and intellect are univocal between God and human beings, the distinction between the divine and human will and intellect can only be a modal distinction. For example, Wolter says “The question naturally arises, How does transcendental unity differ from predicamental unity? Scotus answer that they are not really distinct at all in creatures. His position may be explained further by pointing out that the distinction between the two is that of a formal perfection and its mode. This distinction is not only characteristic of unity. It is common to all so-called pure perfections or those whose formal ratio does not involve limitation.” See Wolter, *The Transcendentals*, 102. See also Hoeres, *Der Wille als reine Vollkommenheit*, esp. 40–41, 113-240. A modal distinction is a lesser distinction than the formal non-identity distinction that I mentioned above. For example, between colours and their degree of intensity, there is a modal distinction. For example, between shades of magenta there is a modal distinction: both are the same colour but they differ in their degree of intensity or, as Scotus would say, degree of perfection. Similarly, the difference between the infinite will of God and the limited will of humans is modal, a difference in degree of perfection: the human will is a less perfect will, while the divine will is the most perfect will. On the issue of modal distinction see King, “Scotus on Metaphysics.” On the distinction between formalities and modalities see Ulrich Leinsle, “Schwester ‘formalitas’ oder Bruder ‘modus?’ Mastri im Streit um modale Entitäten,” in *Rem in seipsa cernere: Saggi*
Power is also a pure perfection. In Ord. I, d. 43, Scotus says:

[Text 21] God’s power that is ordered towards himself—that is, a certain absolute perfection by which God is formally powerful—is in God in the first instant of nature, as is any other pure perfection unqualifiedly (just as to be the power to heat follows heat, which heat however is an absolute form). 116

[Text 21] is about God’s power towards himself, which is an aspect of God’s power that is unrelated to creatures. Only this aspect of God’s power can be a pure perfection, for pure perfections are intrinsic to God, and so they cannot be related to anything outside of God. If this power were related to creatures, the perfection would be extrinsic, for it would require the existence of creatures. Thus, it seems that not every aspect of power is a perfection.

There is an important consequence of the will, the intellect, and power being pure perfections: they are also transcendentals. This is so because as the traditional transcendentals (such as good, one, and truth) are said of being before being is said to be finite and infinite, that is, before being is divided into divine or created being, pure perfections are also said of being before being is said to be finite and infinite. 117 Moreover, like the traditional transcendentals, pure perfections can be finite, when they are attributed to creatures, but they can also be infinite, when they are attributed to God. When pure perfections apply to God, they refer to what traditionally theologians call divine attributes such as wisdom, goodness, power, etc. 118

Pure perfections such as the will, intellect, power, and wisdom are also different from the traditional transcendentals. Indeed, pure perfections are perfections of being. But there is a catch:

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116 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 43, n. 14 (Vat. 6: 358): “potentia Dei ad se - id est aliqua perfectio absoluta qua Deus formaliter est potens - sit in Deo in primo instanti naturae, sicut et quaelicet alia perfectio simpliciter (sicut calorem consequitur esse potentiam calefaciendi, qui tamen calor est absoluta forma).”

117 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 8, pars 1, q. 3, n. 113 (Vat. 4: 205–206): “Sed tunc est dubium, qualia sunt illa praedicata quae dicuntur de Deo, ut sapiens, bonus, etc. Respondeo. Ens prius dividitur in infinitum et finitum quam in decem praedicamenta, quia alterum istorum, scilicet ‘finitum’, est commune ad decem genera; ergo quaecumque conveniunt enti ut indifferentens ad finitum et infinitum, vel ut est proprium enti infinito, conveniunt sibi non ut determinatur ad genus sed ut prius, et per consequens ut est transcendens et est extra omne genus. Quaecumque sunt communia Deo et creaturae, sunt talia quae conveniunt enti ut est indifferentens ad finitum et infinitum: ut enim conveniunt Deo, sunt infinita, - ut creaturae, sunt finita; ergo per prius conveniunt enti quam ens dividatur in decem genera, et per consequens quodcumque tale est transcendens.”

118 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 19, q. 1, n. 25 (Vat. 5: 277): “Ad aliad dico quod perfectio simpliciter, id est quae formaliter posset esse infinita, non dicit nisi aliquid quod potest esse essentiale in divinis et ad se (et tale aliquo modo praaintelligitur relationibus originis), cuiusmodi sunt sapientia et bonitas etc.”
while traditional transcendentals apply to any kind of being (for example, all beings are good), pure perfections are not attributed to every kind of being. For example, wisdom is a pure perfection, for it is better to have it than not to have it, and it is also better than anything incompatible with it. But not all creatures have wisdom. Recall [Text 20]: its point is that although any created being insofar as it is being can have all the perfections comprised in being, this does not happen. As a mole cannot see, although by being an animal, it can see, so a dog, for example, although it can have wisdom because it is a being, it is nevertheless deprived of wisdom, because of its canine nature.

If pure perfections are not attributed to every kind of being, how can they be similar to transcendentals? Pure perfections are similar to the traditional transcendentals because like the traditional transcendentals, they do not have any higher genus above them—there is only being, which is not a genus. Thus, wisdom, insofar as it is taken according to that account of it in which it is common to God and creatures, is such that it cannot be contained under a genus, but only under being.

This discussion of pure perfections is directly relevant for how the powers of the soul are unitively contained in the soul. Since the will and the intellect are pure perfections, they are already contained in being. On the one hand, this explains how the powers of the soul are parts of the soul—the powers of will and intellect come to the soul from its essence having being. This is why they are posterior in nature to the essence of the soul. On the other hand, this also explains why the powers of will and the intellect are the same as the soul: these powers are features of being in the same way as the transcendentals are, so like the transcendentals, they are the same as being. What role then does the essence of the soul play in accounting for these powers? What makes the human soul human, its specific difference of being rational, accounts for these powers being in the soul, but only insofar as rationality is not a reason for them to be excluded from the soul. Rationality is not a positive reason for the powers of will and intellect to be in the soul, but a negative reason: rationality does not eliminate the two perfections that are the will and the intellect as, for example, the canine nature does with wisdom.

119 See Scotus, *Ord. I*, d. 8, pars 1, q. 3, n. 114 (Vat. 4: 206): “Sed tunc est aliud dubium, quomodo ponitur sapientia ‘transcendens’ cum non sit communis omnibus entibus. Respondeo. Sicut de racione ‘generalissimi’ non est habere sub se plures species sed non habere aliud supraveniens genus […], ita transcendens quodcumque nullum habet genus sub quo contineatur. Unde de racione transcendentis est non habere praedicatum supraveniens nisi ens, sed quod ipsum sit commune ad multa inferiora, hoc accidit.”
The discussion about pure perfections is also relevant for powers other than the intellect and the will. As we have seen in [Text 21], power is a pure perfection, and so a transcendental that pertains to being—so Scotus agrees with Simplicius on this point. Power comes to an essence from its being—an essence is not the ground why something has a power, but why it does not have a power. In reply to an argument that beings need to have at least passive powers, Scotus says that even for the most imperfect being, insofar as it is a being, it is not repugnant to it to be perfected and so to have a passive power, but it can happen that because it is a being of a certain kind, it might be deprived of any such power. Indeed, Scotus admits that there are beings that can lack active powers or passive powers. Many of (if not all) the forms that are in other categories than substance and quality lack powers. There are even forms pertaining to the category of substance that lack any active power—however, note that when he makes this claims, he probably means that these forms lack powers to act on something else. Moreover, many of the accidents are so imperfect that they cannot receive any further perfection and so they lack passive powers. Probably, there are beings that lack both active and passive power. The existence of beings that do not have powers fits with the suggestion that power is a pure perfection. Recall the case of the dog that lacks wisdom. Wisdom is a transcendental, but it is not a transcendental that applies to every being, because the essence of some beings precludes these essences from having wisdom. Similarly, power is a transcendental that does not apply to every being, because the essence of some beings precludes these beings from having power.

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121 See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 6, n. 11 (OPh 4: 579): “Itaque hac opinione — tamquam abutente terminis — praetermissa, simpliciter tenendum est quod non solum non in quocumque ente, sed nec in quacumque forma, fundatur relatio potentiae activae.” For the view that even some substantial forms lack active powers see Scotus, QSM IX, q. 6, n. 13 (OPh 4: 580): “factio sive productio similis convenit imperfectissimis substantiis, ut elementis; et parum ascendendo mixtis inanimatis non convenit; ultra ascendendo, mixtis animatis convenit communiter; ultra ascendendo, perfectioribus, ut Intelligentiis sive corporibus caelestibus, non convenit. Ita quod non videtur aliquae posse maxima universalis assignari cui enti conveniat ‘produere.’” On this point see also Richard Cross, “Some Varieties of Semantic Externalism in Duns Scotus’s Cognitive Psychology,” Vivarium 46, no. 3 (2008): 283.

122 See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 10, n. 9 (OPh 4: 600): “Aliqua vero entia sunt fita imperfecta ut nullam perfectionem possint suscipere, ut accidentia ultima substantiae inhaerentia. Et ideo nullam habent potentiam passivam.”

123 This might sound strange, for one would think that if a being does not have any power, it does not have any effects and so one cannot even say that it exists. (This principle is known as Alexander’s Dictum: to be is to have causal powers). One can add that Scotus too should be worried about allowing in his ontology the existence of such an otiose being. However, when Scotus allows for beings that lack both active and passive power, he is not denying that such a being can have a causal contribution, namely in the manner of a final or formal cause. This must be so because, as we have seen, Scotus in the end sides with the view that powers as principles overlap with only efficient and material causes. Thus, this leaves open the possibility that beings without powers can be causes only in the formal or final sense.
If power is a transcendental, it might not be clear how one gets from this claim to the claim that things have *powers*. To this worry, I point out that a thing’s essence plays a double role. As I have said, it accounts for why a thing lacks power, but it also accounts for the way in which it does have power. Recall that as a pure perfection, power can be infinite, for when applied to God, power is infinite. Power, which in principle can be infinite, gets limited by the essence of a thing, and becomes different limited powers. Thus, essences account for why things do not have power or, when they have powers, for why their powers are limited and of a specific kind.

How, according to Scotus, are the powers (other than the will and the intellect) distinct? They are not distinct in virtue of distinct aspects of relatedness as Henry maintains. They are also not distinct according to their accounts, at least not in the way the will and the intellect are. Powers get to be distinct because essences are distinct: powers are not distinct by themselves.

If this interpretation of how Scotus conceives of the relation between power and essence is correct, then his view is completely different from both Aquinas’s and Henry’s. Both Henry and Aquinas link powers with essences. For Aquinas, a limited act of being accounts for the limited power a thing having an essence now has—being is the reason why an essence’s power is limited. For Henry, essences as essences do not have powers, but powers follow what is possible for essences. When an essence gets being, this might be an occasion for that essence to receive some powers, but it might happen that the essence does not get any power if God does not decide to also give being to the acts that are possible for that essence. For Scotus, however, power is directly linked with being, not with essences. But essences also account for powers. They account for why a thing has specific powers, or they rule out the possibility of a being having power. Indeed, the essence of a thing might be even what accounts for that thing not having a power at all, as we have seen it happens in the case of very imperfect beings. This view about the relation between power, essences, and being allows Scotus to claim that powers are intrinsic: essences have the powers they have in virtue of being the essences they are.

**4.4. Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the ontological status of powers, and especially to understand whether powers are different entities from their bearers. In contrast to a well-known view (attributed to Thomas Aquinas), which posits that powers are accidental qualities of their bearers, both Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus posit that powers are ontologically the same as their bearers. In this
chapter I have explained how these authors envisage the relation between powers and their bearers and I have discussed the reasons for maintaining the views they maintain. In dealing with these issues, two questions were in the background of the discussions. First I was interested in whether powers are intrinsic or extrinsic, because, as I argued, Henry’s view about powers is different from that of Aquinas and Scotus on this point: only Henry maintains that powers are extrinsic. Second, I was interested in the interplay between essence, being, and power, for as I argued, only Scotus makes power primarily an attribute of being and so a transcendental, while Henry and Aquinas maintain that powers primarily follow essences.

With the issue of the causal contribution of powers and their ontological status cleared away, I can now proceed to discuss the issue of self-motion. The claims and interpretations put forward in this and the previous chapter will be put to work in the chapters that follow.
Chapter 5 Henry of Ghent on Aristotle’s Argument from *Physics* VII.1

Experience shows us that many living and non-living beings move themselves. In the last two books of the *Physics*, Aristotle argues that these cases of self-motion either are cases of accidental self-motion or are not cases of self-motion at all. More precisely, in *Physics* VII.1, he explains that for something to be a genuine self-mover, it needs to be able to move itself essentially and primarily. On the one hand, to move itself primarily means to move itself as a whole and not in virtue of a part that is distinct from the whole, for if a self-mover moves in virtue of a part distinct from the whole, then self-motion will not be attributed to the whole as a whole. On the other hand, for something to move itself essentially, the ability to self-move must pertain to it either essentially or necessarily; in either case, this will mean that to move itself essentially, such a self-mover needs to have reliable causal powers to do that. As I pointed out in chapter 2, both Aquinas and Simplicius agree that in the context of *Physics* VII.1, these requirements are meant to rule out self-motion in the case of material beings: if these beings were to move themselves, they would move in virtue of some parts that are qualitatively distinct from the whole. Recall that the argument from *Physics* VII.1 invites us to consider any alleged genuine self-mover, of which a part is at rest. Since one cannot say of such a being that it moves as a whole (a part is at rest), it follows that any alleged self-mover is not in fact a genuine self-mover. For this argument to work, however, one needs to further assume a certain understanding of parts, namely that these parts are also quantitatively distinct parts. Only in this case can a part be indeed at rest (since a material being cannot move all its parts in an instant), and thus the whole cannot be said to move as a whole. But this means that the conclusion of Aristotle’s argument is that no material being can be a genuine self-mover.  

There are two interrelated questions that this chapter and the following one address, namely whether Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus allow for genuine self-movers (in the Aristotelian sense) and whether they think that material beings can be such genuine self-movers. Addressing these questions will allow us to explore Henry’s and Scotus’s view about the possibility of self-motion and self-agency. This chapter has four sections. In the first section, I will focus on Henry’s claim that there are degrees of self-motion, a claim that makes the issue of whether Henry accepts genuine self-movers even more pressing. I take this claim to contain in a nutshell his response to the Aristotelian argument

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1 For more details of this argument, see chapter 2, section 2.1.
from *Physics* VII.1. In the subsequent sections I will discuss how this reply applies to self-agency, to the self-motion of elements, and finally to the self-motion of the will.

**5.1. Degrees of Self-Motion**

One problem with finding Henry’s reply to Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VII.1 is that Henry never directly addresses this argument. But even so, he gives us sufficient information to reconstruct his possible reply to it, for he discusses at length an issue that is raised by Aristotle’s argument, namely the problem of how the parts of a self-mover are distinct.

When in *Quodl.* IX, q. 5 Henry asks for the first time about the possibility of self-motion, he starts from the remark that in things, their moving parts, that is, the mover and the moved, are distinct to a greater or lesser degree. Note that Henry does not question a fundamental point of Aristotle’s analysis of self-motion, namely that something moves in virtue of its mover and moving part. What he questions, as we will see in a moment, is the way these parts are distinct. Given these distinctions, he further posits that there are different degrees of self-motion:

[Text 1] Here one must consider six kinds of things which stand in an order in terms of what it means to move. In accord with their order they have a greater or lesser difference between the mover and the moved, for in the first level, the mover and the moved differ less than in the second, and so on. […] Those six levels of things which stand in an order, […] in terms of what it means to move are the following: the first is the divine will in willing; the second is the created will in willing. […] The third is the created intellect in understanding; the fourth is a heavy or a light thing in moving itself. […] The fifth is the animal in moving itself by forward motion. The sixth is the cause in moving something separate from itself to produce something else.³

Let us focus on three important points that [Text 1] makes, namely that there are degrees of self-motion and God is the perfect self-mover. Some things are more self-movers than others because in

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² The closest Henry comes to a formulation of the Aristotelian argument is in *Quodl.* X, q. 9. There he reports the following objection: nothing moves itself *per se* and as a whole because in self-motion there needs to be a real distinction between the mover and the moved. See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 217): “Non movet se per se secundum totum, quia simpliciter et reale differentia debet esse inter movens et motum.”

them there is less distinction between what moves and what is moved. At the bottom, and not a self-mover at all, there is anything that moves or generates something distinct from itself such as a human being that generates another human being, or a stone that moves another stone. In these cases, the mover or the generator is really distinct and separate from what is generated or the moved. This is why in generation, the distinction between the mover and the moved can be in substance, location, magnitude, and even essence: a baby is a numerically different substance than its mother and the moved stone is a numerically different substance than the stone that moved it. At the other end of the spectrum, there is the divine will: in God, there is the smallest distinction between what moves and what is moved. In between God and created generators, there is a series of entities in which the mover and moved are not distinct either in substance or location or both.

To see why created beings are imperfect self-movers, let us first see why God is the only perfect self-mover. The problem with this claim is that it is unclear what it means for God to be a self-mover; more precisely, it is unclear why Henry talks about mover and moved in God. Thus, we need to understand what the terms ‘mover’ and ‘moved’ mean when applied to God.

Let us start by noting that [Text 1] does not refer to active and passive powers, but to agents (mover) and patients (moved). What acts is not the power but the suppositum, an individual. Thus, [Text 1] says that between agents and the patients, there can be distinctions of different degrees. But what does it mean for agent and patient to be more or less distinct? Aren’t agents and patients as distinct as they can be? In generation, agent and patient are distinct in substance, location, and even essence. This is not a controversial claim—everybody agrees that the agent and patient are so distinct in generation. The unclarity appears when Henry also says that where there is perfect self-motion, namely in God, mover and moved should be less distinct. How is this possible, since God is in no way a patient? Recall Henry’s view about the most adequate meaning of potency or power. Power in the most adequate sense refers to that power which always exists together with its act because this power is the whole account of the act. This happens in God, where His power is always together with His acts and the distinction between power and act is only rational. This means that because His power is always with its act, God does not need to receive anything from outside Himself, so God cannot be

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4 Ibid. (Leuven 13: 100–101): “Cetera vero moventia et mota, secundum quod ordine naturae magis recedunt ab ipso, maiores habent et minores differentiam inter movens et motum. Unde ultimum movens et motum, in sexto gradu movens et motum, differentiam habent inter se secundum substantiam et essentiam et distant loco et magnitudine, cum moventia et mota in aliis gradibus intermedium non penitus different secundum substantiam et essentiam aut secundum locum.” By distinct in essence, Henry probably refers to cases of generation that are done through seeds, since seeds have different substantial forms than what is generated.
a patient. But to the horror of some of his contemporaries, Henry argues that one can apply not only the terms ‘active power’ and ‘action’ but also the terms ‘passive power’ and ‘passion’ to God, albeit in a restricted sense. In God, there are passive causal powers to receive his divine attributes and his actions.⁵ These passive powers are the divine essence insofar as it is receptive of the divine attributes and actions.⁶ Moreover, there are also actions and passions, but not because there is change or motion (there cannot be any change and motion for the divine power and act are always together). These actions and passions are only aspects of relatedness to what causes or receives the act, a feature that is constitutive of what actions and passions are in any being, whether divine or created.⁷ So, in God, agent and patient are distinguishable only in virtue of one being constituted by an aspect of relatedness to what receives the act, while the other is constituted by an aspect of relatedness to what causes the act. In conclusion, God is the perfect self-mover, because among agent and patient, active and passive powers, the acts themselves and the essence that has aspects of relatedness (that constitute divine powers and actions), there is only a rational distinction—that is, no real distinction at all, for God is simple.

How are agent and patient distinct in created self-movers?⁸ First, we need to remember that a feature of created beings is that these beings are endowed with powers for their perfections or operations, but they do not possess all these perfections at all times. This is why created beings are limited beings. Henry renders this point using the way the powers of created beings are related to their acts or operations: in any being other than God, the act is not always present to the power. The metaphysical explanation for this is that in created beings, the act is a really distinct entity from the power or the essence. From this, Henry draws two conclusions about the imperfections of created

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⁵ See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 35, q. 2 (Leuven 28: 16): “Alio modo, ut potentia et actus differant sola ratione, et nulla transmutatione omnino intelligitur transitus in re a potentia in actum, immo nec omnino transitus, sed fixa permanentia perfectionis potentiae per actum. […] Secundo modo non removemus potentiam passivam a Deo, immo talem potentiam necessam habemus in ipso ponere, et respectu actus ut habitus qui est forma, et respectu actus ut agere qui est operari.”

⁶ See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 35, q. 6 (Leuven 28: 45): “De potentia ergo passiva in Deo dicendum quod, cum non sit aliud in eo cuius est, quam receptibilitas eius ad quod est, receptibilitas autem semper est in eo in quo est, respondens secundum gradum perfectionis quae recipienda est, ut, quanta sit perfectio recipienda, tanta sit et receptibilitas in recipiente.”

⁷ See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 32, q. 5 (Leuven 27: 97): “Unde, si huiusmodi duo praedicamenta ad divina transferuntur, non manent nisi secundum communem rationem puri respectus, secundum quem etiam denominatur agens omne in quantum agens est. […] Et sicut actio manet in Deo secundum rationem sui respectus, similiter et passio, absoluta omni ratione motus et pluralitatis distantis ab actu.”

⁸ This paragraph reformulates the ideas presented in the previous chapter, section 4.2.1.
self-movers. On the one hand, given that an act is a really distinct entity from the power (or the essence that has the power), when a created being acts on itself and receives its act, there is a change in it, and so the agent (or what starts the causation of the act) and the patient (or what ends the causation) are different. Recall Henry’s ‘peculiar’ understanding of what a patient is: a patient is a thing informed by a form because a patient is what ends the causation (or, to use the technical term, principiation) and this can only be something informed by a form. For example, when a fire heats a pot, the patient is the heated pot and not the pot alone. Thus, if, per absurdum, the pot were a self-mover, in it the agent would be the pot, while the patient would be the pot informed by heat, and so the agent would be distinct from the patient.

On the other hand, because the act is an accident of the essence, the essence and the power cannot be the full account of this act. This must be so because one always needs to account for why a certain act is brought about at this moment and not another one. Since the essence and the power are not the full account of the act, to bring about the act, the essence and the power need help. In *Quodl.* IX, q. 5, Henry uses this explanation to account for the imperfection of created self-movers. Because created powers and essences cannot completely account for their acts, something else is needed for these acts to be brought about. As we will see in a moment, for the causation of the act of the will, an object needs to be presented by the intellect. Depending on what else is needed, some things are more self-movers than others because the help that the power gets from outside can be more or less substantial. For example, the object presented by the intellect to the will does not cause the act of the will, but it is required as a sine qua non cause.

In the next sections, we will see that Henry’s view about the degrees of self-motion can be interpreted as a reply to Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VII.1. Here I only want to note that Henry goes beyond the Aristotelian requirements for genuine self-motion when he posits that only in God is there perfect self-motion. He maintains this claim about God because of his view about how the act is present to the power—only in God is what acts the same as what is done, since His power and essence are the full account of His acts. God is not only a per se agent and patient, but He also acts and receives as a whole—in Him, the aspects of relatedness that constitutes Him as an agent and patient are always “as of Himself to Himself” because divine acts are not distinct from the divine essence. Indeed, in God, the divine attributes and acts are not some accidents that God undergoes. Moreover,

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there is nothing outside God that help Him in any way to act. On the other hand, created beings are not complete self-movers, but they are nevertheless self-movers. In [Text 1], Henry acknowledges that there are at least four other cases of self-motion, with some things being more self-movers than others. In what follows I will discuss three cases, two that Henry mentions in [Text 1], namely, the self-motion of the will and of elements, and another one that is not mentioned in [Text 1], namely, self-agency. I will start with the case of self-agency because it is the least complicated case, although it is the most difficult in terms of why one maintains it.

5.2. Self-Agency

In the first chapter I discussed one issue that was debated together with the possibility of self-motion, the issue of the causation of proper and inseparable accidents. I called this kind of causation self-agency. Self-agency is distinct from self-motion, for some questions that arise in the context of self-motion (Why does the motion happen now and at this place? Is the self-mover impeded?) do not arise. But self-agency has a fundamental similarity with self-motion—it is about causing some features in oneself. The difference between the two cases is just that in self-motion, these features are the features that a thing has only sometimes, while in self-agency, these features are necessary and inseparable. Because of this, self-agency is as important as self-motion for understanding how something can act on itself.

Let us start by recalling what exactly it is at stake in the problem of the possibility of self-agency, that is, in the question whether a substance can cause its necessary and inseparable features. Recall that in chapter 1 I explained that to account for how necessary and inseparable features are derived from essential ones and how these necessary and inseparable features are entities distinct in being from the essential ones, philosophers in the thirteenth century understood the essential features as causes of the necessary and inseparable ones. A causal relation between these features can account for why the essential features are prior to and more fundamental than the necessary and inseparable ones: essential causes are prior and more fundamental than their effects. It could also account in principle for the dependence of the necessary and inseparable features on the essential ones: usually, in medieval philosophy, effects depend on their causes for their being and essence, and causes cause effects in virtue of their essences and being. Moreover, a causal relation can explain why the necessary features are necessary, for usually essential causes are necessary for their effects. This is, in a nutshell, the intuition behind the tendency in the thirteenth century to understand the relation between what is essential and what is necessary in causal terms.
Henry tackles the problem of self-agency in *Quodl.* X, q. 9, which asks whether a subject can per se be the sufficient cause of its accidents. His answer is the following:

[Text 2] It seems to me that according to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* book VII—as was discussed in the previous question—it must be said that a substance is the cause of the essence and being of its accidents, not only as a material cause, but also as an efficient one, but in different ways. That it is indeed the material cause of the accidents—this it has from itself and from its nature; that it is the efficient cause of them—this it has from the generator or the producer of the essence of the substance in being. By producing [the substance] in being, the producer impresses in it the power to effectively cause in itself all [its] accidents.¹⁰

In contrast to other medieval authors,¹¹ Henry posits that a substance has two roles in the causation of its accidental features: it plays the role of a material cause, because it is the subject or the *substratum* in which these features inhere or are received; it also plays the role of an efficient cause of these features because it brings them about. The view that a substance is both the efficient and the material cause of its accidental features entails that a substance acts on itself, for while it brings about or produces these features, it is the same substance that also receives them—the substance is a self-agent.

[Text 2] tells us in what way a substance is an efficient cause, namely by giving being and essence to its accidental features. The idea that an efficient cause gives being or existence suggests that the discussion of such a type of causality does not pertain strictly to physics. Indeed, philosophers dealing with the natural world are interested in efficient causes as principles of motion, while philosophers interested in metaphysics take an efficient cause to be primarily a cause that gives existence.¹² Given this division of labour, self-agency should pertain to metaphysics.

Why does Henry maintain the possibility of self-agency? A reason might be, as [Text 2]

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¹⁰ See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 221): “Et videtur mihi hic esse dicendum quod secundum Philosophum, VIIο Metaphysicorum, ut tactum est in quaestione praecedente, substantia est causa essentiae et esse suorum accidentium, non solum ut materialis, sed etiam ut efficientis, sed alter et alter. Quod enim est causa accidentium materialis, hoc habet a se et natura sua, quod vero sit causa efficientis eorundem, hoc habet a generante et producente essentiam substantiae in esse. Producens enim ipsa in esse imprimis ei virtutem causandi effective in se omnia sua accidentia.”

¹¹ For other views on how the causation between the necessary and inseparable accidents was understood see chapter 1, section 1.2.3.

suggests, that Henry takes this to be Aristotle’s position. Indeed, in Michael Scot’s translation, Aristotle says at the beginning of *Metaphysics* VII that “it is evident that substances are the causes of the essence of accidents.”\(^\text{13}\) Note that neither Moerbeke’s translation of the passage from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* nor Aquinas’s commentary on the same passage mentions that substances cause the essence of their accidents. However, this is not the only place from where Henry could have taken the view. For example, Boethius of Dacia refers to Aristotle’s new translation of *Metaphysics* XII as an authoritative place for the view that “the intrinsic principles of a subject are the extrinsic principles of its properties.”\(^\text{14}\)

Another reason is that Henry wants to explain the causal origin of these accidents. In *Text 2*, Henry refers to a passage from his *Quodl.* X, q. 8, where he argues that accidents have their own being and essence. The claim is occasioned by a discussion about accidents in the Eucharist: during the Mass, the substance of the bread is supernaturally destroyed, while its accidents are preserved miraculously. Since God can perform miraculous deeds, but not logically impossible ones, medieval philosophers try to offer a logical and metaphysically plausible explanation of the Eucharist case. Thus, Henry proposes that the accidents are preserved miraculously by God because accidents have their own being, one that is different from the being of the substance in which they inhere.\(^\text{15}\)

The view that accidents have their own being seems to go against Aristotle’s view in *Metaphysics* VII. Aristotle claims that none of the accidents, for example, accidents such as ‘to walk’, ‘to sit’, or ‘to be healthy’ “is either self-subsistent or capable of being separated from a substance, but rather, if

\(^\text{13}\) The text of Michael Scot is printed in Averroes, *Aristotelis Stagiritae Metaphysicorum cum Averrois Cordubensis Commentariis*, Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentariis 8 (Venice: Apud Junctas, 1562), fol. 154rA. “Manifestum est igitur quod haec est causa essentiae cuiuslibet illorum, et illa sunt propter istam.” Commenting on the Aristotelian passage, Averroes also agrees that substances must be the causes of the essences of the accidents, because substances are nobler than accidents. Ibid., fol. 154rb E–F: “Deinde dicit ‘manifestum est igitur’ etc. et cum hoc declaratum sit de substantiis, manifestum est quod substantiae sunt causae essentiae accidentium et accidentia non sunt nisi propter substantias. Et hoc necessarium est, quoniam, cum declaratum est, quod nomem ens dictur de decem praedicamentis et dignius de substantiis. Et est declaratum quod cum plura communicant in eodem nomine et quoddam dignius quibusdam, illud quod est dignius illo nomine, est causa caeterorum.” From the context, it seems that ‘essentia’ refers more to being than to essence. The argument assumes that substances exist by themselves, while accidents depend on substances. But it is not clear how the independent existence of substances will get us to the idea that they are the causes of the essences of accidents.

\(^\text{14}\) See Boethius of Dacia, *Quaestiones super librum Topiciorum*, lib. V, q. 3, 257: “Iuxta quod scire debeas quod forma adventiens materiae aliquam proprietatem causat in subieco; secundum Philosophum XII. Metaphysicam secundum novam translationem principia subiecti intrinsecas sunt extrinsecas principia suarum proprietatum.”

\(^\text{15}\) Henry has a more complex argument than what I summarized here. The argument can be found in *Quodl.* X, q. 8 (Leuven 14: 209–10).
anything, it is that which walks or is seated or is healthy that is an existent thing.” Henry proposes another reading of Aristotle’s key claim that accidents “are not said to be beings unless they pertain to a being”:

[Text 3] Accidents “are not said to be beings unless they pertain to a being” and [they are not said to be] essences unless they pertain to that essence, which is the substance; [these are said about them not because accidents] do not have their own being and essence, but because they do not have their being and essence apart from a substance, but in a substance together with the being and essence of the substance, and furthermore causally from them.

While accidents pertain to a substance, they still have their own being and essence. To pertain to a substance is understood as existing in it, that is inhering in it, and being causally from it. If [Text 3] is indeed the text that [Text 2] refers to, then to be causally from a substance means to be efficiently caused by a substance. Compared with [Text 2], [Text 3] makes two additional claims: (1) accidents have their own being and essence, distinct from the being and essence of a substance, although not apart from it (separatim), and (2) accidents are said to have their essence and being in a substance and from a substance. This second claim is expressed as early as Quodl. III, q. 14:

[Text 4] For it is impossible that an accident is something natural unless it is in a substance and proceeds in being from that substance.

The important point in both [Text 3] and [Text 4] is that accidents cannot exist unless they are caused by a substance. More precisely, Henry claims that accidents cannot naturally have their essence and being, that is, exist as accidents, unless they are in a substance and brought about by a substance.

In short, these texts suggest that Henry proposes the view that substances cause their accidents when he argues for the view that accidents have their own being and essence. Recall what I said in chapter 1. If substances have accidents and these accidents have a kind of being different from the

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17 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. X, q. 8 (Leuven 14: 215): “accidentia ‘non dicuntur entia nisi quia entis’, neque essentiae nisi quia sunt illius essentiae quae est substantia, non quia non habent propria esse et proprias essentias, sed quia non habent sua esse et suas essentias separatim, sed in substantia cum esse et essentia substantiae, et etiam causaliter ab illis.”

18 This claim must be qualified by adding ‘naturally not apart from the being and essence of a substance’, because supernaturally, as in the Eucharist case, accidents can have their being and essence apart from substances, for God can maintain them in being and essence.

19 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. III, q. 14 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 67r): “cum impossible est esse accidentis aliquod naturaliter nisi in substantia fit et ab ipsa substantia procedat in esse.”
being of their substance, one must explain from where these accidents get their being. In positing the self-agency view, Henry offers an explanation for the problem of the causal origin of these accidents.

One might worry that given the texts mentioned above, Henry maintains the absurd view that a substance causes all its own accidents. If substances were the cause of all their own accidents, then there would no longer be any need for transeunt causation, for there would be no need for causal interactions between substances: substances can cause their own accidents. Henry does not maintain such a view. In at least two places, in *Quodl.* X, q. 9 and *Quodl.* XI, q. 6, he emphasizes that only some accidents of a substance are caused efficiently by the substance itself. For example, simple or common accidents such as the colour white or black in a piece of wood are never caused by the wood itself, but always by a different agent, for example, by a painter.

For Henry, a substance is the cause of some of its accidents. In his early *Quodl.* III, q. 14, he explains that “the substances themselves are the per se causes and first principles of the first accidents.” Substances are the per se causes of their first accidents because they are these accidents’ efficient and material causes. Henry does not explain what these first accidents are, but from the context we can safely infer that he refers to the *propria.* Later, in *Quodl.* X, q. 9, he is more precise about the accidents caused by a substance: besides *propria,* inseparable accidents are also efficiently and materially caused by the substance that has them. Moreover, a substance is the efficient and material cause not only of *propria* and inseparable accidents, that is, accidents that are always in a subject, but

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20 In *Quodl.* XI, q. 6, in reply to an objection probably by Godfrey of Fontaines, Henry explicitly says that he never intended for a substance to have the ability to efficiently cause its simple accidents: “Alia vero accidentia de quibus in dicta quaestione non fecimus mentionem, quia non pertinebant ad propositum, de quibus tamen illi opponebant, quae suo subiecto secundum forma substantialem constituto in esse non de necessitate sequuntur ipsum secundum esse actuale ipsorum, cessante omni impedimento. Et haec non sunt nisi accidentia communia et separabilia, quae non consequuntur ratione formae substantialis ullo modo nisi determinentur per agens alius quae sit ipsum generans, ratione qua generat ipsum secundum formam substantialem, qualia accidentia sunt albedo et nigredo circa lignum. Propter hoc lignum in eo quod lignum nullo modo potest esse causa suae albedinis aut nigredinis, quia ad neutrum illorum determinatur forma ligni neque per generans ipsum secundum formam substantialem inquantum huiusmodi.” See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 453r). This is probably the text of Godfrey: “Alia vero accidentia de quibus in dicta quaestione non fecimus mentionem, quia non pertinebant ad propositum, de quibus tamen illi opponebant, quae suo subiecto secundum forma substantialem constituto in esse non de necessitate sequuntur ipsum secundum esse actuale ipsorum, cessante omni impedimento. Et haec non sunt nisi accidentia communia et separabilia, quae non consequuntur ratione formae substantialis ullo modo nisi determinentur per agens alius quae sit ipsum generans, ratione qua generat ipsum secundum formam substantialem, qualia accidentia sunt albedo et nigredo circa lignum. Propter hoc lignum in eo quod lignum nullo modo potest esse causa suae albedinis aut nigredinis, quia ad neutrum illorum determinatur forma ligni neque per generans ipsum secundum formam substantialem inquantum huiusmodi.” See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 453r). This is probably the text of Godfrey: “Alia vero accidentia de quibus in dicta quaestione non fecimus mentionem, quia non pertinebant ad propositum, de quibus tamen illi opponebant, quae suo subiecto secundum forma substantialem constituto in esse non de necessitate sequuntur ipsum secundum esse actuale ipsorum, cessante omni impedimento. Et haec non sunt nisi accidentia communia et separabilia, quae non consequuntur ratione formae substantialis ullo modo nisi determinentur per agens alius quae sit ipsum generans, ratione qua generat ipsum secundum formam substantialem, qualia accidentia sunt albedo et nigredo circa lignum. Propter hoc lignum in eo quod lignum nullo modo potest esse causa suae albedinis aut nigredinis, quia ad neutrum illorum determinatur forma ligni neque per generans ipsum secundum formam substantialem inquantum huiusmodi.” See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VI q. 7 (PhB 3: 158).

also of accidents that are only at certain times in a subject,\textsuperscript{22} such as acts of volition or the motion of elements. Note that, in this text, Henry treats self-agency and self-motion together as cases in which a substance causes something in itself.

Let us focus on how self-agency is possible. A substance gives being and essence to both its \textit{propria} and inseparable accidents. Usually, medieval authors\textsuperscript{23} understood this causation as being without motion because it does not take place in temporal moments, for there is no temporal moment in which the substance exists without having its \textit{propria} and its separable accidents—the \textit{propria} and the inseparable accidents are always present in a substance.\textsuperscript{24}

In \textit{Quodl.} X, q. 9, Henry explains in more detail how the proper and inseparable accidents are caused:

[Text 5] Concerning the first member [of the distinction, that is, concerning accidents that are always present in their subjects], I say that the direction and order of nature proceeds in such a way that whenever certain \textit{per se} properties and actions necessarily follow from a certain form, the one that generates the thing with respect to its form greatly disposes the thing so that, from itself, it is in accidental potency towards that [kind of] accident both from the part of its matter and form. From the part of its matter, [the generator disposes the thing] so that it necessarily receives that [kind of] accident; from the part of its form, [the generator disposes the thing] so that it necessarily produces that [kind of] accident from the potency of matter.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 222–23): “sic dico dividendo quaestionem in duo membra, quorum primum est de ratione et modo causandi accident quod iam est actu in ipso subjecto, secundum vero de ratione et modo causandi accident quod nondum est actu in subjecto. […] Et sic quoad istud membrum quaestionis respondondic dicens quod omne subjectum per suam formam est causa agens et efficient suorum accidentium propriorum et similor communium, concurrentibus circa ipsum agentibus primis, quae ipsum ad hoc disponunt secundum iam dictum modum.”

\textsuperscript{23} Two of these authors are Thomas Aquinas (see the text quoted in note 57 in chapter 1 above) and John Duns Scotus (for Scotus’s view, see section 6.1 in the next chapter).

\textsuperscript{24} To my knowledge, Henry never says that the causation of \textit{propria} and inseparable accidents is without motion. He is in fact silent on how this causation happens. However, it is not clear that he would agree with Aquinas and Scotus. Recall that one of the tenets of Henry’s view about causal powers is that in created beings these powers are always together with a privation, the privation of their manifestation. When applied to the case of self-agency, this means that even the causal powers of a substance would be together with a privation. But if change means passing from potentiality and privation to act, then the causation of the first accidents should be a case of change.

\textsuperscript{25} See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 222): “Quoad primum membrum dico quod sic procedit cursus et ordo naturae, quod quandoque ad aliquam formam consequuntur naturaliter aliquae per se proprietates aut actiones, generans rem secundum illam formam in generando sic eam summe disponit, quod, quantum est de se, sit in potentia accidentali ad illud accidentis et ex parte materiae et ex parte formae: ex parte materiae disponendo ipsum ut sit necessitas ad receptionem illius accidentis, et ex parte formae disponendo eam ut sit necessitas ad illius accidentis productionem de potentia materiae.”
At the core of Henry’s explanation of how a substance cause its proper and inseparable features is the notion of accidental potency. Medieval philosophers inherit this notion from Aristotle’s work (for example, the notion appears in *Physics* VIII.4, 255b18–19 in the context of the discussion about the motion of elements), where it is opposed to the notion of essential potency. Something is in essential potency to being of a certain kind when it is not yet of that kind but it can be. For example, according to Aristotelian physics, elements can suffer changes so that they become other kinds of elements. Water is in essential potency to becoming air. Something is in accidental potentiality to an activity when it is a thing of a certain kind but, because it is impeded, it is unable to perform the activities proper to it. An impeded stone is in accidental potency to lie at the centre of earth. A thing in accidental potency is thus ready to cause its proper activity as soon as the right conditions for this causation are met.26

Henry explains the readiness of a substance to cause its accidents as the substance being disposed by its generator. He leaves unexplained whether the generator is a natural or supernatural agent, but the most probable interpretation is that he refers to a supernatural agent, namely God. For a substance to be disposed to cause its proper and inseparable accidents means that the substance has the required causal powers or abilities to bring about these accidents and receive them. Already [Text 2] mentioned that a substance has causal powers in virtue of its essential parts. Since a substance is a hylomorphic composite, it is essentially made of matter and a substantial form. A substance is a material cause in virtue of its power to receive accidents, a power that it has from its matter. A substance is an efficient cause in virtue of having a form endowed with powers to bring about its accidents, a form and power that it has from its generator. In [Text 5], Henry uses the verb ‘to dispose’ to explain the same points he explained before with the use of the term ‘causal power’: the dispositions are distinct in virtue of the distinct parts of a substance, for in virtue of its matter a substance has the disposition to receive a certain accident; in virtue of its form a substance has the disposition to bring about its accidents. For example, the generator of a fire disposes fire so that through its form it will

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26 Ibid., 222–3: “Unde generans ignem, quia levitas et caliditas sunt per proprietates sequentes formam ignis, simul disponit materiam ignis ut sit necessitas ad recipiendum levitatem et caliditatem, et similiter formam ignis ut sit necessitas producendi illam de sua materia. Et hoc totum procedit ex virtute agentis impressa igni, et quoad materiam et quoad formam. Et ideo ignis statim cum generatis est, quoad suam formam substantialem de potentia materiae cui adhaeret, immediate generat de potentia quae suae materiae adhaeret, mediante potentia ad formam substantialem, ipsas formas accidentales, levitatem scilicet et caliditatem.”
bring about its accidents of heat and light and through fire’s matter it will receive them.27

The fact that the whole individuated hylomorphic composite is the agent of its proper accidents and the patient or receiver of them explains why the causation of proper and inseparable accidents is a case of acting on oneself. If in this case of causation, form and matter were the agent and patient, the causation of proper and inseparable accidents would be only a case of acting on something else: a form will act on matter. This implies further that Henry does not view the form and matter of the hylomorphic composite as two homuncular entities. Matter and form are the matter and the form of a certain composite. Second, not only the hylomorphic composite plays an efficient causal role, but also the generator. Because the generator disposes the form and the matter of the hylomorphic composite, it plays the role of a remote efficient cause of the hylomorphic composite’s first accidents. The role of the proximate cause of these accidents is played by the whole composite in virtue of its form.28

Is the substance that brings about its proper and inseparable accidents a genuine self-agent, that is, an agent to which acting is attributed per se and primarily? Henry never addresses this question. However, we can note that a substance having the ability to cause its own necessary and inseparable accidents has features that make it a genuine self-agent. A substance has, in virtue of its really distinct parts (its matter and form) reliable powers to bring about its necessary and inseparable accidents. Although the powers are in virtue of really distinct parts, they are the powers of the substance. Thus, what can move and what can be moved are not really distinct from the substance. In fact, given what I discussed in the previous chapter, namely that the powers of the substance are the same as the substance, the reliable powers of the substance to bring about its necessary and inseparable accidents must be the same as the substance. This further means that such a substance should be something to which the causation of the necessary and inseparable accidents must be attributed essentially and primarily: the substance acts in virtue of some parts (the reliable powers), which are the same as the whole.

It is important to note that Henry can claim that substances are genuine self-agents because

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27 Note that [Text 2] and [Text 5] have different views about the origin of the passive powers. [Text 2] says that these powers come from the thing itself, while [Text 5] says that the generator disposes the thing to have such powers. Given Henry’s view about powers as extrinsic determinations made by God in accord with His plan of creation, [Text 5] seems to be the correct view.

28 Ibid., 223: “Tamen causa proxima agens talium accidentium et operationum sunt ipsae formae rerum, sive totum compositum ratione formae tantum.
in his account of the possibility of self-agency, he relies on a non-quantitative understanding of part. Indeed, the way the causation of necessary and inseparable accidents is explained is by appeal to powers, dispositions, matter, and form. But all these parts are not quantitative parts. The powers of the substance to bring about its necessary and inseparable accidents are not powers confined to bits of matter—they are powers of a whole entity, albeit in virtue of its metaphysically distinct parts. Moreover, given what was said in the previous chapter, these powers must be the same as the substance. As we will see in the next section, in employing non-quantitative parts to explain the possibility of self-agency and self-motion, Henry follows Averroes’s way of dealing with cases of self-motion.

By admitting the possibility of self-agency, does Henry go against Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VII.1 and admit the possibility of material self-movers/self-agents? It seems that he does, for Henry describes substances that can cause in themselves their necessary and inseparable accidents as being composed of matter and form. In fact, one might wonder whether immaterial substances can be self-agents, for it is not clear in virtue of what these substances would have a receptive power. However, it is also true that self-agency remains a strange case of causation: a substance causes in itself those accidents that a substance has at all times. Be that as it may, the way in which self-agency is possible gives us a model for how self-motion is possible.

5.3. Self-Motion of Elements

In [Text 1], Henry counts the elements (water, air, earth, and fire) as more of self-movers than any other material things—even animals are self-movers in a lesser degree than the elements. Because elements are self-movers in such a high degree, discussing their case is important. But there are two other reasons why the case of elemental self-motion is important. On the one hand, Henry’s view that the elements are self-movers, and so more self-movers than animals, goes against Aristotle’s view that elements are not self-movers. Thus, it is interesting to see how Henry deals with the Aristotelian arguments. On the other hand, in arguing for the possibility of self-motion, Henry relies heavily on Averroes’s insights into the problem of elemental motion, especially on his understanding of the notion of part. These insights will prove useful for grasping not only the case of elemental self-motion but also other cases of self-motion.

Recall that Aristotle gives three arguments for why elements cannot be self-movers. First, he argues that elements are too simple to be able to move themselves—they do not have parts, but for
something to move itself it needs to have parts. Second, the motion of elements is not derived from
the element themselves because only living beings are the source of their own motion. Third, he points
out that the elements do not have power over their own motion, so they cannot be self-movers. In
what follows I will discuss how one can respond to the first two arguments. Note that the second and
the third arguments are already problematic because they assume without proving that to move oneself
one needs to be a living being. Nevertheless, the second argument raises an interesting issue that is
worth discussing here.

One way to refute Aristotle’s view about elemental self-motion is to question his claim that
elements do not have an internal source of motion. In commenting on Physics II.1, 193a1, where
Aristotle argues that a thing’s nature is an internal source of motion and rest (any natural thing has a
nature and it is this nature that explains the range of motions or changes that the thing can undergo),
some ancient authors, for example Simplicius, proposed that a thing’s nature can be an efficient cause,
an internal source of motion and rest. Given this, anything that has a nature would be a self-mover
for it would be a source or efficient cause of its own motion. Since elemental motion is by nature and
according to nature, elements should also be self-movers.

Contemporary interpreters of Aristotle do not agree that one should consider the nature of a
thing, and thus, the nature of elements, as an active source or cause of motion and rest. Thus, they
propose that elemental motion should be understood as being caused only passively by the nature of
elements. For example, the upward motion of fire is caused by the fire’s nature not actively, but
passively: fire is a material cause of its upward motion, that is, it can receive the upward motion, or,
to put it in terms of powers, fire has a passive power for going upwards, but not an active one.

that exist by nature differ from those that do not exist by nature in no other way than that ‘they have within themselves a
source of change and cessation of change’; by source he means the efficient cause.” For discussions about the view that
nature is an efficient cause and the problems it raises see Sean Kelsey, “Aristotle’s Definition of Nature,” Oxford Studies in
Ancient Philosophy 25 (2003): 60–66; on parts of the tradition of identifying nature with an active principle see Andreas
Lammer, “Defining Nature from Aristotle to Philoponus to Avicenna,” in Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition, ed. A. Alwishah
and J. Hayes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 121–42. But recall that by the thirteenth century, Simplicius’s
commentary on the Physics has not yet been translated in Latin.

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4. Furley’s view is far from being unanimously accepted in contemporary
discussion. For example, both M.L. Gill and S.M. Cohen attribute to elements what I. Bodnár calls “a special, one-sided
nature”. (See Bodnár, “Movers and Elemental Motions in Aristotle,” 90.) Gill maintains that elements have a principle of
motion, but not of rest, which means that “in lacking an internal active source, they cannot limit their natural motions at
their natural termini.” (See Mary Louise Gill, “Aristotle on Self-Motion,” in Self-Motion: From Aristotle to Newton, ed. Mary-
Louise Gill and James G. Lennox (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), esp. 31.) Cohen, on the other hand, argues
for a different view: he disagrees that elements have an internal principle of being moved, but he argues that they have an
Indeed, *Physics* VIII.4, 255b5–256a2 says that heavy and light things, the elements, have only an external efficient cause of their motion, not an internal one: they are essentially moved by what generates them or are accidentally moved by that which removes the impediments to their motion.\(^3\)

In the end, this interpretation proposes that to have a nature is not the same as being the origin of one’s motions, for sometimes having a nature means to be a source of suffering motion and not of initiating it.

Although Aristotle’s text seems to preclude understanding the nature of elements as being the active source of their motion, some medieval authors argue for a variant of this view, namely that the form of the element is an efficient cause of its motion. One of these authors is Averroes, who sets up the framework for the medieval debate about elemental motion. As Anneliese Maier explains,\(^3\) for Averroes, an element gets its form and all its features, including motion and the ability to move itself upwards or downwards, from what generates it. But he also maintains that what accounts for the continuation of elemental motion must be something intrinsic to an element, namely its internal features (its qualities or its powers). Thus, he says that in an element, the form, heaviness, “moves, insofar as it is a form, and it is moved, insofar as it is in matter.”\(^3\) By this, he means that in an element,

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\(^{31}\) The view that the generator of the elements plays a causal role in the motion of elements is not generally agreed upon in contemporary philosophy, despite Cohen’s claim to the opposite. See Cohen, “Aristotle on Elemental Motion,” 153. For example, Gill argues that the generator becomes irrelevant once the elements are produced, so in her view, the generator does not play any causal role in the elemental motion, while the remover of the impediment is only an accidental cause of elemental motion. Instead, she proposes that the active principle of elemental motion is the element’s natural place. For example, the centre of the cosmos is the natural place of the element earth and functions almost as a form of the element, by providing a goal for the earth’s motion. See Mary Louise Gill, “The Theory of the Elements in *De Caelo* 3 and 4,” in *New Perspectives on Aristotle’s De Caelo*, ed. A. C. Bowen and C. Wildberg (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 139–61. Be that as it may, there seems to be a consensus among contemporary scholars of Aristotle that the elements do not have an internal active principle of motion. The main textual evidence for this is Aristotle’s *Physics* VIII.4, 255b29–31.

\(^{32}\) See Maier, *An der Grenze von Scholastik und Naturwissenschaft*, 143–182, especially p. 156. Maier deals with the problem of elemental self-motion or issues related to this in other studies too. See Maier, *Die Vork Replies Galileis im 14. Jahrhundert*, especially chapter 1 “Die Wesenbestimmung der Bewegung” and chapter 3 “Ursache und Kräfte;” see also Maier, *Zwischen Philosophie und Mechanik*, especially chapter 1 “Motus est actus entis in potentia …,” chapter 2 “Forma fluens oder fluxus forma?,” and chapter. 3 “Bewegung als intensive Grösse.”

\(^{33}\) See Averroes, *In De caelo* 3.2, t. 28 in Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis libros De caelo*, Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentariis 5 (Venice: Apud Junctas, 1562), fol. 198K–99A, especially K. “In corporibus autem simplicibus idem est motor secundum speciem et motum, sed different secundum modum. Lapis enim movet se, inquantum est gravis in actu, et movetur inquantum est potentia inferius. […] Forma igitur eius movet, inquantum est forma, et movetur,
the form of heaviness plays the role of an efficient cause of the elemental motion; the same form is also moved as a part of the element, that is, accidentally.

One might consider that the problem of the continuation of the motion of the elements should not be an issue for Aristotle. For example, James Weisheipl argues that Averroes and authors following him misinterpreted Aristotle. More precisely, they allegedly misunderstood the Aristotelian principle from *Physics* VII.1, “omne quod movetur ab alio movetur,” to say that “everything that is moving must be moved by something here and now conjoined to the moving body.” Because of that, Weisheipl continues, they searched for that which, when conjoined with a moving body, explains its continuous motion, and they identified it as being the form of the moving body (that is, that in virtue of which the moving thing is what it is). Thus, they proposed the view that the forms of things are a sort of *motor coniunctus*, a conjoined mover that plays the role of an efficient cause of motion. But, in Weisheipl’s opinion, there is no reason to read the Aristotelian principle in this way—the principle says only that that which starts moving needs to be put in motion by something else.

There is a metaphysical issue that prompts medieval authors to worry about the continuation of elemental self-motion. Scotus explains this issue clearly: as long as the heavy thing moves, there must be an actual mover of it because “any effect as long as it is actually caused, has its cause in actuality.” So, the issue that worries medieval authors, Scotus explains, is that, given the temporal simultaneity between a cause and its effect, in considering the question of the self-motion of the

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34 For studies that deal with the medieval debate over elemental motion see note 6 in the Introduction.
36 Ibid., 81–82.
37 See Scotus, *Ord.* II, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 453 (Vat. 7: 358): “Omnis effectus, quando est actu causatus, habet causam in actu (quod patet per Aristotelem II *Physicorum* et V *Metaphysicae*, cap. ‘De Causa’: ‘Causa efficiens in actu, et causatum in actu, simul sunt et non sunt.’ Patet etiam – si nulla esset auctoritas – per rationem manifestam, quia quod non est, quando non est, non producit aliquid ad esse). Igitur quando descensus gravis est in actu, tunc aliquid est causans in actu.” So Scotus posits the substantial form as an efficient cause primarily because of the Aristotelian view that the cause must be simultaneous with the effect.
38 Modern philosophers (Hume for example) argue that causes are temporally prior to their effects. In medieval philosophy, Avicenna especially argues for the contrary. One way to envisage the case of simultaneous causation is to think of a case such as the following: a lightbulb emits light as long as electricity passes through it. On the issue of simultaneous causation in Avicenna with some references to Aristotle’s own view, see Michael E. Marmura, “Avicenna on Causal Priority,” in *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. P. Morewedge (Delmar NY: Caravan Books, 1981), 65–83; Richardson, “Avicenna’s Conception of the Efficient Cause.” (Note that the cases discussed by these two authors are cases of generation, not of alteration or locomotion as the case of elemental self-motion is.) For a recent attempt in
elements, one needs to explain what keeps the elements moving when their generators or removers of impediments are not present anymore (since it is possible that the generator or the remover of the impediment is destroyed while elements is still moving). Thus, Scotus posits the form of an element as an efficient cause of its motion because of the Aristotelian-Avicennian view that the cause must be simultaneous with the effect.

Another way to cast doubt on Aristotle’s view about the self-motion of elements is to inquire into the nature of the parts of the self-mover. In *Physics* VIII.4, Aristotle argues that nothing that is one and continuous can be a self-mover, and so because the elements are one and continuous, they cannot be self-movers. According to *Physics* V.3, 227a11–13, a continuous thing has parts that are kept together by contact or by organic union. Some *continua*, such as the animals, seem to be at least accidental self-movers; other *continua*, such as the elements, are not. The reason according to Aristotle is that no continuous and unified thing is a self-mover, but the elements are continuous and unified, that is, homogeneous: 39 any drop of water is water, while any piece of a stone is a stone. But why is the lack of heterogeneous parts an impediment to self-motion?

The answer lies in Aristotle’s claim from *Physics* VIII that any self-mover has a first unmoved part and a first moved part. Based on this claim, one can argue, as Godfrey of Fontaines does, that elements are not self-movers. For the parts of an element to play distinct roles such as being the first mover and the first moved part, these parts must be heterogeneous, for otherwise what pertains to one part will pertain to the other too. 40 But the elemental parts are not heterogeneous, so elements cannot be self-movers. Note that Godfrey’s argument assumes the term ‘part’ to refer to a quantitative part. For example, however small an element is cut, the resulting parts are the same as the whole: any part of earth is earth.

However, one does not need to take ‘part’ in a quantitative sense. In his commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*, Averroes proposes that parts can be distinct in a different way than in quantity:

40 See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl*. VI, q.7 (PhB 3: 155): “Unde, quia animal non est sic unum quod habeat partes integrales et subiecto distantes unius rationis, potest in una parte esse dispositio secundum aliquam actualitatem, ratione cuius potest esse activa respectu alterius partis qui habet alien dispositionem ratione cuius potest esse passiva et quia in gravi non sunt partes heterogeneae sic differentes, ideo una non potest habere potentiam activam respectu alterius, sed quicquid convenit per se uni respectu alterius, convenit et alteri respectu ipsius et ideo illud quod movet se oportet esse compositum ex partibus heterogeneis.”
[Text 6] That which is moved \( \textit{ex se} \) will either be divisible into mover and moved according to definition, or it will be divisible into parts according to contiguity, just as what is congregated from certain things, which is continuous according to contiguity. Everything, therefore, which is moved \( \textit{ex se} \) will either be distinct or divisible according to definition or according to quantity, i.e. parts. And since the simple bodies are not divided in either of these ways, it follows that they are not at all moved \( \textit{ex se} \).\(^{41}\)

A self-mover requires its mover and moved parts to be either distinct in space or just in definition. For example, in self-moving animals, their soul and their body are parts that are distinct in definition, because although the soul and the body make one thing—an animal—and cannot exist separately, they are nevertheless defined differently—they have different accounts of what they are.\(^{42}\) By introducing the distinction in definition, Averroes allows for a thing without spatially distinguishable parts, such as a living being with its soul and body, to be a self-mover.

But [Text 6] says that elements are not self-movers \( \textit{ex se} \) or essentially. This is surprising, because one might expect that they are. Indeed, if the soul and the body, although they are the same in reality, are distinct in account, and thus an animal is a self-mover, for the same reason elements should also be self-movers, for they also have parts that are different in account. Any element has two parts, a substantial form and matter, parts that are different in account, but the same in reality—they cannot exist separately and they make one element. To this, Averroes replies that both the moving and moved parts must be in act, while in the case of the elements, matter is in potency.\(^{43}\) Thus, although in an element, the form of heaviness moves the whole element and is moved \textit{as part} of the whole, the element itself cannot be strictly speaking a self-mover because it is not made up of parts that can play the role of the mover and the moved.

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\(^{41}\) The translation is from Hassing and Macierowski, “Latin Averroes on the Divisibility and Self-Motion of the Elements,” 149. For the Latin text see Averroes, \textit{De Physico} 8 (Apud Junctas 4: fol. 367v1): “quod movetur ex se aut erit divisibile secundum definitionem in motorem et motum, aut erit divisibile in partes secundum contiguitatem, sicut quod congregatur ex aliquibus, quod est continuum secundum contiguitatem. Omne igitur quod movet ex se aut erit distinctum aut divisibile secundum definitionem aut secundum quantitatem, id est partes. Et cum corpora simplicia non dividandur altero modorum istorum sequitur quod non movatur ex se omnino.”

\(^{42}\) Ibid., fol. 367rF: “Motor enim debet esse distinctus a moto aut secundum definitionem et esse insimul, sicut illa quae moventur ab extrinseco, aut secundum definitionem tantum, sicut est dispositio in habitibus animas. Anima enim quae est motor in eis, distinguuitur a corpore, quod est motum secundum definitionem, licet non distinguatur secundum esse, sed licet quod possibile est animam esse sine corpore, nisi equivoce.”

\(^{43}\) Ibid., fol. 367vG: “Si igitur aliquid dixerit quod sunt corpora simplicia composita ex materia et forma quorum utrumque est distinctum secundum definitionem a reliquis, dicemus ad hoc quod prima materia non est existens in actu et illud quod movetur ex se debet dividi in motorem et motum in actu, quoniam illud quod est in potentia neque movetur neque movet.”
Henry uses Averroes’s insights to show that elements are self-movers. First, he agrees that elements are not the ultimate origin of their motion, because their motion is initiated either by the generator or by what removes an impediment to their motion. For example, the generator is responsible for giving an element its form, and so, although the motion of an element is consequent upon its form, its ultimate origin must be in the generator. The remover of an impediment is responsible for the motion of the element taking place at a certain moment, namely when the impediment is removed. Henry concludes, in agreement with Averroes, that the elements move themselves per accidens insofar as the starting moment of their motion is concerned: elements start to move either because of their generator or because of the remover of the impediment. In neither case, however, does their form play any essential role in starting their motion.

Second, although Henry agrees that elements do not originate their motion, he argues that they are the per se cause of their motion and its continuation. They are the source of their own motion because they move in virtue of their own forms. What are the parts in the self-motion of the elements? The per se moving cause of the elements’ self-motion is an accidental form in them. For example, heavy things move in virtue of their heaviness, and light things in virtue of their lightness; both heaviness and lightness are accidental forms that necessarily follow from the elements’ substantial form. The per se moved part of the elements’ self-motion is their body, which is composed of matter and form. These two parts are not spatially distinct; in fact, the only distinction between these parts are “as the form and the subject actuated by the form.”

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44 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IX, q. 5 (Leuven 13: 115): “Nullo modo possunt moveri ex se, ut determinat Philosophus VII Physicorum, intellige, ut sint causa inchoandi motum sine causa extrinseca, ut sit movens per principium quod, existens in una parte, movet vicissim alteram. ‘Hoc enim anima torum proprium est, et aliter possent stare in medio motus ex se ipsis’, ut dicit ibidem. Et quoad hoc dicit ibidem quod ‘quae non moventur a se ipsis, ut gravia et levia, moventur aut a generante et faciente grave aut leve, aut ab impedientia et prohibentia solvente: ab altero enim horum debent habere quod incipient moveri’. […] Ex se enim moventur exsequendo motum, sed exsequi non incipiunt nisi per aliud: vel per generans dans formam qua exsequuntur ex se motum, vel per removens prohibens, per hoc ponendo ipsa in tali statu in quo per formam iam habitam possunt exsequi motum.”

45 Ibid., 115–16: “Quod cum habuerint, ulterior movetur ex se prosequendo motum, et quoad hoc movetur ex se per accidens, dicit Commentator super VIIIIm Physicorum: ‘Ex gravi est principium receptionis ut moveatur ab extrinseco, non principium actionis nisi per accidens’. […] Et sic per accidens movetur a se ipsis […] quia non incipiunt se movere postquam non movebantur prius, nisi quia non erant in dispositione quae possent moveri, vel propter formae carentiam vel propter formae habitae impedimentum; et quoad hoc sunt causa motus sui per accidens, et generans atque removens prohibens per se.”

46 Ibid., 117: “Et est per se movens sic licet forma accidentalis gravis, per se vero motum ipsum corpus gravis compositum ex materia et forma substantialia.”

47 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibetal Questions on Free Will*, 47. For the Latin text see Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IX, q. 5, 117–18: “Quae non distinguuntur nec loco nec situ, sicut distinguuntur movens et motum secundum partes in animali quoad
mover do not need to be understood as quantitatively distinct. But in contrast to Averroes, he has an answer to why elements can be *per se* self-movers.

To see better how Henry changes Averroes’s view, let me tackle an objection that Godfrey of Fontaines raises against Henry. According to Godfrey, Henry maintains that in any self-mover, that which moves is its form and that which is moved is (prime) matter. But, Godfrey notes, even Averroes agrees that both the mover and the moved must be actual, and since matter is potential only, elements cannot be self-movers.\(^{48}\) Godfrey’s objection overlooks two important points that Henry makes. First, it is not prime matter that is moved, but matter as actualized by the substantial form of the element.\(^{49}\) Moreover, the mover and the moved are not, despite what Henry carelessly says in the body of *Quodl.* IX, q. 5, the accidental form and matter, but the moving part is the whole element in virtue of a form (of heaviness or lightness) and the moved part is the whole element in virtue of its matter.\(^{50}\) Indeed, in a later quodlibetal question, *Quodl.* X, q. 9, in reply to the objection that matter cannot be moved because it is not actual, Henry distinguishes between what is moved (the patient) and that on account of which something is moved (*ratio patiendi*). Matter is that on account of which the elements are moved, but what is moved is the whole element.\(^{51}\) Of course, at the core of Henry’s distinction is his view that actions (or passions) are of the whole supposit. Since Henry maintains that it is the whole agent that acts and the whole patient that suffers a change, the whole element must move and be moved,\(^{52}\) although it does so in virtue of distinct parts.

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\(^{48}\) See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VI, q. 7 (PhB 3: 155-56): “Si autem quis dixit quod sunt composita ex materia et forma quae sunt distincta per definitionem, dicemus quod prima materia non est ens in actu et id quod movetur ex se debet dividii in motorem et motum actu.” So Godfrey raises against Henry the point that Averroes makes in his commentary on *Physics* VIII: both the mover and the moved part in a self-mover must be actual.

\(^{49}\) See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IX, q. 5 (Leuven 13: 117): “Et est per se movens scilicet forma accidentalis gravis, per se vero motum ipsum corpus gravis compositum ex materia et forma substantiali.”

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 138: “Grave enim movet se secundum formam et movetur secundum materiam, non quod forma moveat et materia moveatur, sed quod forma est quo totum moveat, et materia quo totum moveatur.” See also *Quodl.* X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 224): “ut patet de gravi et levi, quae generata secundum formam gravis et levis, cessante impedimento, per suas formas gravitatis et levitatis mutantur et transferuntur, hoc deorsum, illud sursum.”

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 234: “Ad secundum, quod ‘grave non movetur ratione materiae, quia motum est in actu’ dicendum quod differt dicere aliquid moveri, et ratione aliquid moveri. Verum enim est quod in gravi materia nec est motum nec mutatum per se, sed totum compositum. Hoc tamen ratione materiae, quia non inest toti potentia ad motum nisi fundamentaliter ratione materiae.”

\(^{52}\) Godfrey recognizes that this claim might be a reply to his worry, but insists that if the elements were self-movers, their parts would need to be the *per se* mover and the *per se* moved respectively. See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VI, q. 7 (PhB 3: 155–56): “Ex his patet quod si grave movet se per se oportet quod in eo sunt talia duo quae sic se habeant non solum
Are the elements genuine self-movers, that is bodies to which motion can be attributed *per se* and primarily? According to some aspects of their motion, elements are *per se* self-movers.\(^5\) If we take *per se* both in the sense of *per se* predication and *per se* causation, elements are *per se* self-movers. They are *per se* causes of their motion because they possess the relevant causal powers to cause their upward and downward motion and their upward and downward motion is a matter of regularity. They are *per se* self-movers even if we consider *per se* in terms of predication: heaviness or lightness, which are that on account of which elements move themselves, are proper accidents of elements, so they necessarily follow from the essence of the elements, and they *are per se secundo modo* predicated of the elements. Thus, heaviness and lightness, although they are accidental features of elements, are sufficiently stable to reliably explain the motion of elements. The elements are not *per se* causes with respect to the starting of their motion for they start to move either because they are generated or because of something that removes an impediment to their motion. Thus, while they *are per se* causes of the continuation of their motion because their motion is carried out by them in virtue of their form and matter, they remain *per accidens* causes as far as the origination of their motion is concerned.

It is less clear whether elements are primarily self-moving, for Henry is adamant in insisting that there is something peculiar about their motion that makes them imperfect self-movers. In *Quodl.* X, q. 9, Henry argues that elements are not primarily self-moving. There, he uses ‘primarily’ as primacy according to the whole, although he does not take this sense from Aristotle, but from proposition 17 of Proclus’s *The Elements of Theology*. Proclus distinguishes three ways in which something is said to move itself. Something moves itself because one part of a thing moves another part of that thing. This is how animals moves themselves, but their motion is not properly speaking self-motion.\(^5\) Something can move itself when the whole thing is moved, but only one of its parts moves. This is how elements...

\(^{53}\) See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 232): “grave et leve moventur a se per se quia tota moventur, licet ratione partis principaliter, et tota movent, licet ratione partis principaliter, et hoc per virtutem quam habent in se sibi propriam, licet eam a generante receperint.”

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 233: “Loquendo autem de tertio modo motus, voluntas movetur a se, et hoc conversione quadam spirituali ad se ipsam, secundum illam 17 propositionem Procli: ‘Omne se ipsum movens primo ad se ipsum est conversum’. ‘Et tale,’ ut dicit commentum, ‘non una parte movet et alia movetur,’ quod contingit in motu progressivo animalium, secundum quod alias exposuimus quod non est simpliciter se ipsum movens, quia simpliciter se movens non secundum aliam partem est movens, secundum alteram motum, sed secundum totam substantiam suam est movens et motum.”
are moving, but immediately Henry notices that the case does not completely fit them. The last way in which something can move itself is when the whole as a whole moves and is moved. In *Quodl.* XIII, q. 11, Henry explains again why elemental motion does not fit the third description nor perfectly the second. Elements do not move ‘according to the whole’ (*secundum totum*): they are composites of substantial form, matter, and accidental form and they move on account of a part, namely their heaviness or lightness, which is an accident. Henry’s explanation for elemental motion fits with other things he says, but it is still not clear why the attribution of motion to the whole element is jeopardized by the element moving in virtue of a part, given that this part is a necessary accident of the whole.

Most probably, behind Henry’s insistence that elements do not move according to the whole is his awareness that there are tensions between his view that actions (and passions) pertain to *supposita* and his view that accidental forms are their own powers. Although Henry insists that what acts is the whole element in virtue of an accidental form, he does not explain why the motion of the element is attributed to the whole, when it should have been sufficient to attribute it to the accidental form of heaviness or lightness. Indeed, for Henry, accidents are their own powers, for the powers are the same as the essence of these accidental forms: it would seem then that even when an accident inheres in a substance, the power of this accidental form remains the power of that form—it does not become the power of the whole composite. Thus, heaviness is a power to cause downward motion, and the causation of this kind of motion should be attributed to it alone. But this is not what Henry claims: the causation is attributed to the whole in virtue of the form. Henry must have been aware that he does not have any convincing argument why this is the case except for his view that actions pertain to *supposita*. This probably made him reluctant to claim that elements are primarily self-moving, so he

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55 Ibid.: “Neque totum movetur, parte autem movet, neque e converso’, quod contingit quodam modo in gravi et levi: totum enim in eis movetur, sed parte altera principaliter movet, et e converso, ut patet ex dictis; non enim secundum totum est ipsum motum aut a se ipso motum, sed secundum partem eius, et hane et illam.” Notice the use of *quodam modo*.

56 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XIII, q. 11 in Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet XIII*, ed. Jos Decorte, Henrici de Gandavo Opera Omnia 18 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985), 126: “Quartum est ‘secundum totum’, quod similiter necessario cooperatur, quia nullum omnino est inconveniens aliquod compositum moveri a se ipso primo secundum unam partem sui, et movere secundum aliam. Et hoc sive sit pars compositi quod est unum per accidens sicut est gravitas in gravi, qua grave movet se, large sumendo motum.” Note, however, that in this *quodlibetal* question ‘secundum totum’ is opposed to ‘primo’, which is understood as moving *per se* (as opposed to being moved *per accidens* as a sailor is moved because of the ship moves).

57 Recall the discussion about the distinction between Aquinas’s and Henry’s view about the relation between an accident’s essence and its power (sections 4.1 and 4.2.1 from previous chapter). For Aquinas, accidents are not their own powers; once an accident inheres in a substance, the accident’s power becomes the power of the substance, because the substance limits the scope of the power. Henry, on the other hand, insists that accidents are their own powers and does not discuss at all how inhering in a substance makes the power of the accident to become the power of the substance. Without such a discussion, it is not clear why what is done in virtue of an accident is attributed to the whole.
settled for the second-best option: elements are imperfect self-movers, at least when compared with more perfect ones such as human beings, who have acts of volition.\textsuperscript{58}

One might think that elements are imperfect self-movers because they are material beings. It is true that Henry sometimes claims that immaterial powers (such as the will) are self-movers precisely in virtue of being immaterial. In these texts, he uses the vocabulary of ‘conversion upon itself’ and ‘reflecting upon itself’ and he quotes Proclus and Macrobius.\textsuperscript{59} In the end, however, at least Henry’s view about the self-motion of elements is more in debt to Averroes than to Proclus. Like Averroes, Henry understands the concept of ‘part’ in a non-quantitative way, and thus, posits that the elements move themselves in virtue of their form and are moved in virtue of being composed of form and matter. Although the outcome of Henry’s view is that the elements are not properly speaking self-movers, the reason for this is not that the elements are material. Neither immateriality nor materiality bears any relevance for why Henry denies perfect self-motion to the elements.\textsuperscript{60} What matters to him is in general how the powers of created beings are not the full account of their acts, and thus, how what things receive, their operations, are accidents of them—this is a consideration that applies to any created being and explains why none can be a self-mover as God is. Second, it matters to him that the elements move themselves on account of a quality that is an accident of them, and thus they cannot move as a whole—this is a consideration that applies to elements alone.

5.4. Self-Motion of the Will
Leaving aside God, the will, whether human or angelic, is a self-mover in the highest degree. This is

\textsuperscript{58} At the end of the next section, I will mention another reason why the elements are not primarily self-moving according to Henry, namely that they do not own the mechanism through which they move; in contrast, a human being is primarily a self-mover with respects to her volitions, for she moves to have certain volitions through something that pertains to her (\textit{aliquid sui}). In my view, this explanation does not exclude—quite the contrary gives more credence to—what I perceive as a problem in Henry’s account of causality of material beings, for indirectly it points out that for Henry, necessary accidents do not pertain to \textit{supposita} in the same way essential features such as wills do.

\textsuperscript{59} See the text in note 54 above and \textit{Quodl.} X, q. 9, 233-34.

\textsuperscript{60} I disagree with Roland Teske, who seems to make the point that Henry denies self-motion to the elements because they are material, but allows it for the will because it is immaterial. See Teske, “Henry of Ghent’s Rejection of the Principle: \textit{Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur},” 301. Teske probably follows Godfrey of Fontaines, who sometimes accuses Henry of positing self-motion in the will purely on the ground of the will’s immaterial nature. See Godfrey of Fontaines, \textit{Quodl.} XV, q. 4 in Godfrey of Fontaines, \textit{Le Quodlibet xv et trois Questions ordinaires de Godefroid de Fontaines (Texte inédit)}, ed. Odon Lottin, Jean Hoffmans, and Auguste Pelzer, Les Philosophes Belges 14 (Louvain: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de l’Université, 1937), 22: “Si autem dicatur quod potentiae activae secundum se non repugnat quod sit potentia passiva in spiritualibus, non autem in corporalibus; contra: probo primo quod hoc est contra mentem Philosophi; secundo quod hoc est contra rationem.”
not surprising, for the self-motion of the will is considered a sign of its freedom, and the will is a free power. Indeed, recall that at its core the question about the possibility of self-motion of the will is a question about what accounts for our free choices: a self-moving will can cause its choices without being determined by anything other than itself. Are human beings’ choices free in virtue of our ability to think alone (our intellectual faculty) or are they free because there is in us a power for free choice (our faculty of will)? These two faculties or powers of the soul are differently structured: the intellect is oriented towards what is true and the will is oriented towards what is good. Thus, their functions are different: the intellect’s function is just to get things right, while the will’s function is to get what is good for us. The worry is that if what accounts for our freedom is only our ability to think, or if our will is moved by the intellect, then we end up with the problematic view that people make bad choices only because they do not know better.

Henry defends the view that ultimately we are free in virtue of our will, not in virtue of our intellect. To explain how we are free in virtue of our will, he argues that the will can move itself to its own acts. But before explaining how Henry envisages the self-motion of the will, let me note that although in what follows I will talk about the self-motion of the will, because Henry also does this, the will, strictly speaking, is not a self-mover. Henry’s talk about the will’s ability to self-move is a short cut for his view that human beings and angels insofar as they have a will are self-movers. As I pointed out in the previous chapters, Henry is committed to the view that actions pertain to the whole supposit, and not to a part of it. Since a supposit is a subsistent thing, wills cannot be supposits—supposits are the things that possess wills, namely human beings or angels.61

In a nutshell, Henry’s view is that the will moves itself to willing, while the causal contribution of the intellect is only to present an object to be willed.62 To understand this view, we need to discuss three issues. First, we need to see how Henry rejects the opposite view, namely that the will is moved by the intellect. Second, we need to understand how the will can be a self-mover. Third, we need to clarify the role of the intellect in the causation of volitions.

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61 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 455v E–F): “Totus autem homo qui movetur per voluntatem quae est aliquid sui dicitur seipsum movere per se. Dicendum qui revera quia actus et operatio omnis ut per se agentis non sunt nisi suppositi, et hoc sive in creaturis sive in deo. [...] Ideo bene verum est quod totus homo movetur secundum actum volendi per voluntatem.”

62 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IX, q. 5 (Leuven 13: 137): “Sic ergo ad quaestionem dicendum est quod voluntatem ad actum volendi non movet nisi ipsa se ipsa. [...] voluntas vero [...] tamen ad solam praesentiam boni cogniti in intellectu posset se ipsam movere secundum actum volendi illud.”
Henry rejects the views that posit that the intellect moves the will because if the will were moved by the intellect, its free choice would be taken away. In fact, Henry makes an even more extreme claim:

[Text 7] What is once acted upon by something is always passive with respect to it and never active, though it could be active with respect to something else.

If the will is moved even in the slightest by the intellect, the will cannot be but passive with respect to the intellect. One cannot argue against this claim that even the intellect is active with respect to some of its acts, for [Text 7] does not deny that something might be active with respect to an object, but passive with respect to another.

Based on [Text 7], Henry first attacks a position that is very close to that of Thomas Aquinas. In discussing whether the will can move itself, Aquinas proposed that the self-motion of the will is like the self-motion of the intellect. The intellect is able once it has knowledge of the premises to move itself to the knowledge of the conclusions. Similarly, the will, once it is in act with respect to the end, can move itself to will the means to the end. Henry argues that this position does not in fact allow the will to choose freely because it does not allow the will to choose otherwise than as the intellect decides. His reasoning is the following: the will can indeed move the intellect to consider the means, but once the intellect has decided what the best means to attain an end are, the will cannot reject what the intellect has so decided. This is so because the will is determined by what the intellect presents as an end, but what the intellect decides either is an end, can be an end, has the ratio of an end, or is a necessary means to a certain end.

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63 Ibid., 124: “si voluntas moveretur ab ipso quantumcumque modice, nullo modo posset esse actus circa illud ipsum repellendo, sed necesseret esse illud exsequi sive prosequi ut adipisceretur.”

64 Ibid.: “Quod enim semel passivum est ab aliquo, semper ab eodem passivum est et numquam activum, licet posset esse activum circa aliam.”

65 See Aquinas, ST IaIIae, q. 9, art. 3co (Piana: 770a): “Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, ad voluntatem pertinet movere alias potentias ex ratione finis, qui est voluntatis obiectum. Sed sicut dictum est, hoc modo se habet finis in appetibilitibus, sicut principium in intelligibilitibus. Manifestum est autem quod intellectus per hoc quod cognoscit principium, reductiu ipsum de potentia in actum, quantum ad cognitionem conclusionum, et hoc modo movet se ipsum. Et similiter voluntas per hoc quod vult finem, movet se ipsum ad volendum ea quae sunt ad finem.” See also De Malo, q. 6, ad. 20, 152: “Ad vicesimum dicendum, quod idem secundum idem non movet se ipsum; sed secundum alium potest se ipsum movere; sic enim intellectus, in quantum intelligit acta principia, reducti se ipsum de potentia in actum quantum ad conclusiones; et voluntas in quantum vult finem, reducti se in actum quantum ad ea quae sunt ad finem.”

66 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. IX, q. 5 (Leuven 13: 124): “Nullo modo tamen posset secundum dictam positionem recedere a volando illud ad quod mota est per intellectum ut velit, postquam esset ei determinatum a ratione. In quantum enim est determinatum, vel est finis, vel includit rationem finis, in hoc videlicet quod sine ipso non posset haberini finis, et ideo de
The second target of Henry’s criticism is a view positing that (1) the will is moved by the intellect only when the intellect presents what is to be done as a demonstrative conclusion, but (2) the will has free choice when the intellect presents what is to be done as a persuasive conclusion. Henry identifies the first claim as being Aristotle’s position. He makes two further points about this position, namely that (1) it allows the will to be necessarily moved by the intellect, but not coerced and (2) it assumes that the will is a passive power to be actualized by its proper good, that is by what the intellect presents as good. In fact the second point explains why the will is moved by the intellect without coercion and violence: the good presented by the intellect as a demonstrative conclusion will perfect the will’s passive power so that although the will is determined, it is not determined against its nature, that is by violence or coercion.

Henry engages only with the claim that the will is moved by the intellect when something is presented as a demonstrative conclusion. (Probably he takes the second claim to mean that when the good is presented as a persuasive conclusion, the will is not moved by the intellect because it is up to the will to decide whether the intellect made a persuasive case or not.) He recognizes that this claim makes sense, for there are cases in which the will is determined or necessitated by the intellect. For example, in the case of the beatific vision, the will cannot do otherwise than enjoy God, for He is the object that fully perfects the nature of the will. But he also notices that with respect to the supreme good, the will does not have free choice. The case of the supreme good is a special one; in the case of goods other than the supreme good, the will is neither determined nor necessitated by the intellect.

\[\text{necessitate movet ut finis et bonum secundum omnia particularia, et ut secundum omnem considerationem boni: quod enim tale est, necessitat voluntatem superando ipsam quoad possibilitatem respectu contrarii.}\]

67 Ibid., 125: “Quod tamen si fuerit determinatum a ratione ut conclusio demonstrativa et includens rationem finis, dicunt aliqui quod voluntas illud non potest non velle; si vero non fuerit determinatum a ratione ut conclusio demonstrativa sed ut conclusio persuasoria, dicunt quod potest non velle.”

68 Ibid., 125–26: “Primum vero istorum […] videtur esse positio Philosophi, V Ethicorum, fundata super hoc quod appetitus est movens motum ab appetibili cognito, […] quod voluntas ex necessitate movetur ad consentiendum sive volendum, et ad prosequendum volturum si non impediatur exterius, ut potentia passiva ab appetibili cognito sicut a suo proprio activo.”

69 Ibid., 127: “voluntas sic determinari non potest a quocumque determinato per intellectum citra bonum summun immediate visum, unde in hac vita non potest sic determinari nisi in universalis, secundum quod homo non potest non velle esse beatus.”

70 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 236): “Unde sciemus et quod voluntatem ponere moveri ab alio non reputatur inconveniens propter ab alio moveri simpliciter, sed solummodo propter moveri de necessitate ab alio, quae et libertatem et libertatem arbitrii tollit. Simpliciter autem necessitate immutabilitatis bene potest moveri a se circa sumnum bonum, quia circa sumnum bonum necessitas immutabilitatis stat cum libertate, licet non cum libero arbitrio, quia statim prae sente summo bono per apertam visionem, non potest voluntas non moveri in illud.”
In the end, Henry rejects the Aristotelian position. At first sight, however, it might seem as if Henry agrees with this position. Indeed, he allows the will to be determined by the supreme good as presented by the intellect. He also claims that this determination is done without coercion and violence. But these claims do not entail that the will is passive with respect to the supreme good or, which amounts for him to the same thing, that the will is moved by the intellect when it presents the supreme good. In the end, Henry maintains the view that the will moves itself to choose the supreme good, but it does this necessarily; it does it freely, but without free choice. Of course, one might immediately wonder what freedom means for Henry. Many identify freedom with the ability to do otherwise. But then, when the will lacks free choice, it lacks the ability to do otherwise and so it seems not to be free. In his last quodlibetal question, Henry defines freedom of the will as a faculty by which the will “is able to proceed to its act by which it acquires its good from a spontaneous principle in itself and without any impulse or interference from anything else.” So for Henry, freedom is defined in terms of an ability to be the cause of one’s own acts, without violence or coercion, that is, the ability to be the ultimate origin of one’s choices, and not in terms of the ability to choose between alternatives. But more importantly for my purpose here, this means that for Henry the will is active with respect both to the supreme good and to goods other than the supreme one.

How is the will able to move itself to willing or nilling the object presented by the intellect? Like any power, the will is only intentionally distinct from its bearer, namely the soul. Moreover, there is in the will a distinction between the will as a mover and the will as a moved, a distinction that Henry casts in terms of distinctive aspects or powers in the will. One aspect is related to the will as a power: like any power, the will is perfected by an act of willing. The relation between a power and its act is teleological; that is, any power is oriented towards its act. Because of this special relation that a power has with its act, once the will receives the act the will’s end is fulfilled, and so the will is perfected

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71 Ibid., 236–37: “Unde, licet de necessitate poneretur moveri simpliciter circa summum bonum, et hoc a se, tamen est inconveniens ponere ipsa de necessitate moveri ab alio vel a se circa alium bonum pro hora, quia a se movetur necessitate immutabilitatis circa summum bonum, quae non excludit libertatem, ab alio autem moveri vel a se circa alium pro hora, de necessitate excludit omnino liberum arbitrium.”


73 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. IX, q. 5 (Leuven 13: 131): “Quomodo ergo ponere debeamus quod voluntas ex se movetur in actum volendi, considerandum est. Cum enim voluntas virtus sit superior intellectu, et per consequens omnibus moventibus secundum modos praetactos, et nihil sibi praeter libertatem eius superius ea praeter Deum, minor differentia requirenda est inter ipsam et suum proprium mobile ab ipsa, quam in moventibus et motis secundum modos praecedentes, licet maior quam in Deo, in quo non est differentia inter movens secundum actum intelligendi et ipsum quod movetur, et ipsum actum quo movetur, nisi secundum rationem tantum, ut dictum est.”
by that act. However, this aspect does not fully account for the complex nature of the will: insofar as the will receives the act and is perfected by it, the will is not different from any other natural power.

But the will is different from any other natural power, for it is the master of all the other powers of the human soul, including the intellect. It has this high position in virtue of its freedom—it is the only free power. This aspect of the will, its freedom, accounts for why the will can move itself to its own act: since the will is so different from any other natural power, the will’s act of volition must be caused in a different way than the acts of powers that work in a natural way. Thus, the act of the will cannot be caused in virtue of that aspect of the will that makes the will like any other power, its ability to receive and be perfected. So it must be caused in virtue of another aspect, its freedom.

Henry takes his explanation in terms of aspects to be a reply to the question how the will moves itself. His reasoning seems to be that one needs to posit that the will moves itself in order to safeguard its freedom because any view that posits that the will is moved in the slightest by the intellect, jeopardizes the freedom of the will. Then Henry uses the will’s freedom to explain how the will moves itself. For human beings to be free means to be able to master their own acts. Thus, there must be in the soul an aspect in virtue of which we are master of our other powers and free. It is in virtue of this aspect that a human being can cause in herself an act of volition. In the soul, there is another aspect

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74 Ibid.: “Est igitur sciendum quod in voluntate est considerare potentiam sive vim receptivam in se actum volitionis, et libertatem simpliciter, et libertatem arbitrii, ut, licet sint eiusdem potentiae, non tamen sola ratione differunt, sed quasi vires in ea, et hoc ex natura rei, non ex sola consideratione rationis.”

75 Ibid.: “Ut voluntatem, in quantum est potentia, intelligamus passivum, et in operatione propria et per eam intellectus. Quod necessarium est ponere, a quocumque movente voluntas ponatur moveri quando de non volente fit volens: est enim velle in ea accidens et operatio, in qua consistit sua perfectio in bene esse.”

76 Ibid., 131–32: “Quam propter libertatem voluntatis, qua debet esse domina suorum actuum, impossibile est poni quod ab aliquo naturali activo, ut est natura et est receptibilis volitionis, alio a se procedat de potentia in actum: hoc enim omnino repugnat libertati, […] et non minus ageretur appetitus voluntatis, quam ille qui est sensibilis.”

77 See note 73 above.
in virtue of which any soul is perfected by having an act of volition. In virtue of this aspect, a human being will receive an act of volition. Note that these aspects or powers are different not only because we conceive them as different, but also because they are in the nature of the will: the will shares similarities with any other power insofar as it can be perfected, but it is also distinct from any other power because it is the master of the other powers of the soul.

Anyone who defends the possibility of self-motion needs to explain why, if something is a self-mover, it moves only at some times and not at others. For example, granted that the will is a self-mover, it is obvious that we are not willing all the time. How then can one explain that the will is self-moving only at some times and not at others? Moreover, any defender of the self-motion of the will needs to explain not only why the will has volitions at some times and not others, but why these volitions concern some objects and not others. To put it differently, any defender of the self-motion of the will needs to explain why the acts of the will are so diverse given that they are caused by the will alone. In answering these two problems, Henry explains the role of the intellect in the causation of the act of the will.

The object presented by the intellect to the will has two roles: it plays both the role of a *sine qua non* cause and of a terminative cause. I will start with explaining the role of the intellect as a *sine qua non* cause. Until now, Henry’s view about the causal role of the intellect with respect to volitions is framed by two claims: on the one hand, the will determines itself freely to will something; on the other hand, the will cannot move itself to will unless something is presented to it by the intellect. Given these two claims, the intellect’s causal role is very limited for the intellect does not cause the volition merely by presenting an object to the will. But in his early quodlibetal questions, Henry adds that the object plays the role of a *sine qua non* cause. This kind of cause does not elicit the act of the will, nor does it act in producing a disposition (or affection) in the will that later contributes to the eliciting of the act. Instead, its causal contribution is compared with the causal contribution of a remover of an impediment. For example, in *Quodl.* X, q. 9, he says that the object plays the role of a *sine qua non* cause because the cognition of the object removes the impediment of ignorance from the intellect, in the same manner in which something is a *sine qua non* cause for the falling of a stone because it removes an impediment that prevents the stone from falling. As we have already seen,

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78 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 242): “Sed quod potest cum effectu velle hoc et non potest cum effectu alius, illius affirmativae causa sine qua non est illa affirmativa, quia scilicet ‘illud cognitum est a ratione’, istius autem negativae causa est non positiva sed negativa, scilicet quia non est alius cognitum a ratione, quod est causa eius quod non potest velle cum effectu alius, sicut impedimentum praebens. Quo quidem impedimento ignorantiae sive nescientiae aut
when Henry comes to clarify what kind of cause the sine qua non cause is, he says that it is a per accidens cause. This means that the causal contribution of the object as a sine qua non cause to the production of the act of volition is indirect: an external object acts on the intellect so that a cognition is formed in the intellect, and once this cognition is present in the intellect, the will can have an act of volition with respect to the object that is intellectually cognized.\(^{79}\)

Henry’s view that the object plays the role of a sine qua non cause in the causation of the will can explain not only how the will remains the sole cause of its volitions but also why the act of the will was caused when it was caused. There are two ways to frame the problem of why the will acts at a certain time and not at another. First, one might ask this question because one is puzzled why the will does not act when presented with a certain object. Indeed, it might happen that when presented with the prospect of doing something, a person abstains from willing or nilling doing that thing. Henry’s answer to this problem is to say that since the will is a free self-mover, it is up to the will to move itself whenever it wants. So when the will does not move itself, despite being presented with an object, this is because the will does not want to will. But one might be puzzled by a more fundamental question: if the will is a genuine self-mover, then why does the will act only sometimes? On this point, Henry acknowledges that the will cannot move itself unless the intellect knows an object as desirable. Note that this condition is met either when the object plays an efficient causal role on the will (a view that Henry rejects) or when the object is present only as a sine qua non cause (a view that Henry endorses). Indeed, the presentation of the object by the intellect also allows the will to have an act of volition, and so it explains why the will acts at a certain moment. On the other hand, the fact that the will moves itself or does not move itself, despite being presented with an object, is to be explained by the free choice of the will.\(^{80}\)

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\(^{79}\) Henry’s view that the object is a remover of an impediment seems a strange view. The impediment is understood as the lack of the object and not as the positive presence of something. In Quodl. X, q. 9, Henry explains that there are two kinds of impediments: positive (for example, the column that impedes a stone to fall) and privative (for example, the lack of an object that can be illuminated by light or to use a modern example, in the same way as a scanner might lack something to be scanned). Ibid., 225: “sciendum est quod aliquid a suo actu qui operatio est, cum sit in perfecto actu secundum formam qua naturam est operari, potest impediri dupliciter, quia et per impedimentum positivum, quemadmodum impeditur grave per obstaculum ne descendat, et per impedimentum privatium, quemadmodum impeditur lux ne illuminet quando non habet illuminabile sibi praeens.” Henry thinks that the will can be impeded in both ways. In the second way, the will is impeded when the object is not present. In the first way, the will is impeded when it is coerced not to will.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 235: “Ad quintum: ‘Si aliquid per se movet se, semper movet se’, dicendum quod verum est in moventibus se naturaliter, nisi sit impedimentum vel finis motus adeptus, ut patet in gravi et levi, non autem in moventibus se libero arbitrio, qualiter movet se voluntas, ut iam dicetur.”
But does Henry have a solution to the problem of how the will can cause so many diverse acts? Henry answers this problem by conceptualizing the role of the intellect in terms of a ‘terminative cause’. Henry starts from the remark that the will is indeterminate with respect to willing and nilling, but also with respect to willing this or that. How does the will determines itself to will this object or that object? Henry answers this question by insisting that the object of the intellect can play two roles. On the one hand, the object as presented by the intellect allows the will to act by removing the ignorance of the intellect: the object is a sine qua non cause for the act of the will; on the other hand, the object is also the final cause of the act of the will: it is that because of which the will acts, not in the sense of eliciting or causing the act, but because the object of the intellect is what terminates the act of the will. The idea seems to be that the object allows the will to act because now there is an object to be desired, but the object also plays the role of an end for the act because the act is concerned with that particular object. For Henry, it is important to keep distinct these roles of the object, as a sine qua non cause and as a terminative cause, for as, he says in Quodl. XII, q. 26, the object as the end does not move the will, that is, it does not contribute to the eliciting of the act, but it plays a role in

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81 The context of Henry’s discussion is the rejection of the view of John of Murrovale about the presence of affections in the will. John is worried by two issues: how the will can determine itself to having an act and how it can have so many different acts. He addresses these worries by understanding the causation of the act of the will on the model of the causation of the act of understanding. Thus, he posits some affections in the will similar to the intelligible species in the intellect. As the intellect needs to receive an intelligible species to have an act of understanding, so to have an act of volition the will needs to be informed by an affection caused in it by the object of the intellect. Once so affected, the will can have an act of volition in the same way the intellect forms an act of understanding when an intelligible species is present in it. For the text of John Murrovale see Ephrem Longpré, “L’oeuvre scolastique du Cardinal Jean de Murro, O.F.M. (+ 1312),” in Mélanges Auguste Pelzer (Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1947), 467–92. The discussion can be found in a question from his Quaestiones disputatae “utrum objectum voluntatis moveat seipsam ad actum volendi finem.” Ibid., 491: “dicendum quod eadem necessitate qua oportet ponere species in intellectu possibili, nam aliter non haberetur ex quo specificarentur diversae volitiones. Nam intellectus secundum idem non potest causare diversas species quibus specificet diversae intelleciones; eodem modo, cum in voluntate sint diversae volitiones oportet ponere diversa in voluntate quibus specificetur quia idem secundum idem non specificetur ita quod sine tali influentia causata ab objecto non potest voluntas in determinatam volitionem nec per eam necessitatur ad volendum sed magis libere secundum diversam influentias potest in diversas volitiones. Ideo Ricardus, De contemplatione: ‘Diversae sunt volitiones secundum diversas cogitationes.’ Et sic dico quod objecta diversa causant in voluntate diversae affections.”

82 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. XIII, q. 11 (Leuven 18: 97): “dico quod triplex est indeterminatio voluntatis. Una est per indifferentiam potentiae ad duo circa actus contradictorios, scilicet ad posse velle et non posse velle quoquo modo.”

83 Ibid., 97–98: “Alia est indeterminatio voluntatis per indifferentiam actus respectu objectorum, et haec duplex, quia vel respectu unius objecti tantum, et hoc vel volendo illud vel non volendo contradictorie seu nolendo contrarie, aut respectu diversorum puta ad velle hoc vel illud.”

84 Ibid., 98: “quia objecti intellectus praesentia in intellectu et determinatio per ipsum non est necessaria voluntati ad eliciendum actum volendi nisi sicut causa sine qua non. Sed tamen ut causa propter quam sic, finalis scilicet est necessaria ad actum volitionis terminandum, et sic potius propter ipsum actum quam propter voluntatem eliciendem - quia necognita velle non possumus, eo quod actum volendi non possumus terminare, nisi ad cognitum. Quod tamen non ut cognitum sed magis ut res terminat actum volendi ut sic bonum cognitum, ut per sui similitudinem est in intellectu, praeivium est actui volendi et movens voluntatem tantum metaphorice.”
the termination of the act.\textsuperscript{85}

Let us consider further on what it means to terminate an act of the will. There seem to be at least two ways in which an object can terminate an act. In one way, an object terminates an act in the sense that the act is about this object. For example, in \textit{De potentia}, Aquinas mentions that the act of understanding terminates in an object, which plays the role of a final cause. As Giorgio Pini observes, Aquinas means that the act of the intellect is directed to a thing as its end.\textsuperscript{86} On the other hand, in \textit{Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum}, q. 58, Peter John Olivi argues that an object terminates the act of the will by making it be of a certain kind. In this case, the object accounts not only for the direction or intentionality of the act of the will, but also for the nature of the act.\textsuperscript{87} He uses an example to explain how the object terminates the act of the will. First, he explains that the object presented by the intellect cannot efficiently cause the act of the will, because the act shares essential features with the will,\textsuperscript{88} features that it cannot get from the object.\textsuperscript{89} Then he compares the will with the sun and its acts with the rays of the sun. Now, if the rays were to illuminate a container which is round, they would take the form of this container; similarly, if the will is to act when presented with a certain object, its act of volition will take the form of the object presented by the intellect. Thus, as the sun’s rays cannot take the form of the container without the container being present, so the acts of the will cannot take the precise form they have without an object of the intellect terminating the acts of the

\textsuperscript{85} See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl. XII}, q. 26, in Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodlibet XII (Quaestiones 1-30)}, ed. Jos Decorte, Henrici de Gandavo Opera Omnia 16 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987), 152: “secundum quod saepe dixit, licet principium voluntatis sit ab intellectu et volitio causatur a bono apprehensum, non tamen hoc est sicut ex causa propter quam sic, sed solummodo sicut ex causa sine qua non, quia ut a causa propter quam sic non movetur voluntas ab aliquod ad actum volendi neque actuatur nisi a se ipsa.”


\textsuperscript{87} See Peter John Olivi, \textit{Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum}, ed. B. Jansen, Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica 5 (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1924), 394: “Ad primum igitur dicendum quod trahere speciem rei suam a sua essentia accipit ab objecto, sed potius ab ipsa voluntate. […] Assimilatur igitur actus objecto tamquam suo intimo termino, non tanquam suo efficienti, immo hoc modo assimilatur ipsi voluntati.”

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.: “quando voluntas exit in aliquem consensum liberum huiusmodi consensus nihil de sua essentia accipit ab objecto, sed potius ab ipsa voluntate. […] Assimilatur igitur actus objecto tamquam suo intimo termino, non tanquam suo efficienti, immo hoc modo assimilatur ipsi voluntati.”

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.: “Unde sicut forma voluntatis est viva et intellectualis et libera et de genere appetitivorum: sic suo modo, scilicet analogice, ipsi actus voluntatis liberi assimilantur sibi in ipsis.”
will. Further, Olivi remarks that the role of the object as a *terminus* is proper only to the objects presented by the intellect to the will, so that the objects presented by the intellect enjoy a singular causal role among different causes.

The question is whether Henry’s own account of the object as a terminative cause allows for the object to play a role both with respect to the directionality of an act and with respect to the act’s form. As we have seen, Henry recognizes the role of the object in accounting for the directionality of an act for he says that the act is directed towards the object. Moreover, he remarks that the function of the object to terminate the act of will is like the function of the centre of the earth that terminates the falling of the heavy object. By this he means that the object is the final cause towards which the act is directed. But he must also mean that the object as a terminating cause accounts for the form of the act. This must be so because Henry introduces the role of the object as a terminative cause precisely in a passage in which he offers a solution to the question of how the will is determined with respect to different objects. It is interesting to note that he adds that the object must be a terminative cause not so much because of the will’s power, but more because of the nature of the act.

Why is it in the nature of the volition to require the object as a terminating cause? I propose the following explanation: an act is *elicited* by the will insofar it is active, and it is *received* in the will insofar as it is passive. Only when the act is received is an act of the will caused. If we take seriously the view that the will is active, then we must agree that it is always ready to act. Thus, the object as a *sine qua non* cause does not cause the eliciting of the act nor its reception. However, for an act of the will to be received, it needs to be of a specific kind, for only when the act of will has the nature it has is the act a suitable entity that can be received in the will. But an act of the will gets to be an act of a certain kind

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90 Ibid., 414–15: “Et potest huius dati qualsunquem exemplum in lumine solis de quo clarum est quod totam essentiam suam accipit a luce solari. Cum enim sol illuminat unum vas rotundum aut triangulare, lumen quod est in vase habet figuram rotundam vel triangularem, non quod ipsum vas effective produxerit in eo hunc figuram sed solum terminative. Sol igitur ad praesentiam talis termini potuit lumen facere sic figuratum, quod tamen per se et absolute asique seilacet omni termino non posset. […] Sic suo modo voluntas quamvis totaliter essentiam praedictorum actuum producat, non tamen potest hoc facere nisi in aspetrnon ordine ad aliquid obiectum, nec ipsi actus sunt apti nati produci ab ea nisi in ordine et cum ordine ad obiectum.”

91 Ibid., 415: “Nisi enim voluntas prius fingeret aspectum suum in obiectum, non posset aliquid velle et eodem modo nisi suus actus esset totus directius et terminatus in obiectum non posset esse nec posset dici quod illud obiectum esset obiectum eius. Non miretur autem quis quod istud singulariter inventur in actibus nostrae animae, quia sicut singulare est ei posse velle et cognoscere, sic et istud.”


93 See text in note 84 above.
from the object to which the power is directed and which terminates the act. Thus, the nature of the act is determined by the will directing its power to a certain object. Indeed, in a question from *Quodl.* XIII, Henry remarks that concerning an act, one needs to consider two things: the order of the act to the object in which the act terminates, and the order of the act to the subject in whom the act is produced. He then adds that the order of the act to the object accounts for the form and species of the act.⁹⁴

We can return to the question at the core of this chapter: is the will a genuine self-mover, that is, does the will move itself *per se* and primarily? Henry’s answer is that the will moves itself both *per se* and primarily. To be more precise, he means that human beings and angels move themselves *per se* and primarily to will something. Why are human beings and angels *per se* self-movers? Recall that there are two uses of *per se*: *per se* predication and *per se* causation. *A* is a *per se* cause of *B* when *A* possesses the relevant causal powers to cause *B* and the causation of *B* by *A* is a matter of regularity. To be the *per se* cause of their motions, human beings and angels need to have the relevant causal powers to move themselves and these causal powers need to reliably produce their acts. Indeed, human beings and angels have the relevant active powers to cause the acts of will and the necessary passive powers to receive these acts. Moreover, ‘being a self-mover’ is predicated of them *per se*, for having a self-moving will is an accident neither of human beings nor of angels.

In *Quodl.* XI, q. 6, Henry introduces a different sense of *per se* than the ones discussed in relation to Aristotle. He starts from the claim that the whole human being moves herself because she moves through something of herself (*aliquid sui*). That through which the human being moves—the will, the intellect, the senses etc.—is not the *per se* agent of the motion, for the *per se* agent is the whole being. But although the human being is the *per se* agent, she moves in virtue of something formal in her, more precisely in virtue of her soul endowed with powers.⁹⁵ The way Henry understands *per se* in

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⁹⁴ See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XIII, q. 6 (Leuven 18: 35): “Dico quod in actu beatitudinis glorioso voluntatis et intellectus duo est considerare, scilicet ordinem actus ad ipsum obiectum ad quod terminatur et cui beatus per actum suum unitur, et ordinem ad ipsum subiectum a quo actus elicitor; ex ordinacione ad obiectum recipit formam et speciem.” Henry talks specifically about the beatific act, but there is no reason why what he says here would not apply to any other act.

⁹⁵ See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fols. 455vE–456rF): “Totus autem homo qui movetur per voluntatem quae est aliquid sui, dicitur seipsum movere per se. Dicendum quod revera quia actus et operatio omnis ut per se agentis non sunt nisi suppositi. [...] ideo bene verum est quod totus homo movetur secundum actum volendi per voluntatem similitur secundum actum intelligendi per intellectum, et secundum actum sentiendi per sensum, et consimiliter in caeteris motibus suis, quos agit per id quod est formale in ipso inquantum habet rationes diversarum potentiarum, quibus non attribuitur actus sicut agenti per se loquendo sed potius sicut medio quo agit. Et sic per se dicitur agere et movere quia per aliquid sui.”
this passage reflects the Aristotelian condition for something to be a per se cause: a self-mover needs to have its own causal powers. But then he adds a second condition, namely, that the power through which the self-mover moves is possessed in such a way that its bearer cannot be moved by something from outside. With this condition, which Henry dubs ‘being moved primarily’, Henry limits self-motion to the case of willing, because for him, only the will is not moved from outside, while all the other powers of the soul, such as the intellect or the senses, are moved by things other than themselves. Henry’s condition from Quodl. XI, q. 6 shows that for a thing to be a per se self-mover, that thing needs not only to possess reliable causal powers but also to have a special ownership of these powers, one that excludes the possibility that the acts of these powers are caused by something external. In the end, a self-mover is a per se self-mover if it is not moved by anything external, that is, if it is its own ultimate origin of self-motion. Given this requirement for per se self-motion, humans and angels are per se self-movers in a way in which elements are not: as far as the starting of their motion is concerned, the elements are only per accidens causes.

Are human beings and angels primarily self-moving? As I have already pointed out, Henry says that they are primarily self-moving because they are the ultimate source of self-motion or because they own the mechanism through which they move. In Quodl. XI, Henry explains this ownership as being because the will, in contrast to the elements, originates its motion. In Quodl. X, in his discussion about how the elements are not primarily self-movers, he hints that there is more to why the elements do not have ownership of their powers, but the will does. Human beings and angels move themselves with respect to willing such that one can distinguish an aspect in virtue of which they are

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96 Ibid., fol. 456r–G: “Quod enim sic movet per se quod nullo modo movere per accidens sic movet quod se toto primo movet non autem per aliquid sui et sic verum est dicere quod homo moveat se et movatur a se non mediante alio extra sed solummodo mediante aliquo sui, ut iam dictum est de motu gravis, ut sic homo sit primum movens se non moto ab alio quia id quo movet se primo ut voluntas quae est aliquid sui est prima ratio movendi absque motu praeecedente in homine ab aliquo alio extra. […] Quare cum nec intellectu potest dici homo movere se per se et per aliquid sui quia intellectus non movere nisi prius motus ab obiecto et eadem de causa multo minus aliqua alia vi, puta sensitiva; nullo ergo modo potest dici quod totus homo movetur per se quia per aliquid sui et per illud seipsum movere per se, nisi illud sit prima ratio movendi scilicet quod movet non mota.”

97 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 233): “Loquendo autem de tertio modo motus, voluntas movetur a se, et hoc conversione quadam spirituali ad se ipsam, secundum illum 17 propositionem Procli: ‘Omne se ipsum movens primo ad se ipsum est conversum.’ ‘Et tale’, ut dicit commentum, ‘non una parte movet et alia movetur’, quod contingit in motu progressivo animalium, secundum quod alias exposimus quod non est simpliciter se ipsum movens, quia simpliciter se movens non secundum alteram partem est movens, secundum alteram motum, sed secundum totam substantiam suam est movens et motum. ‘Neque totum movetur, parte autem movet, neque e converso’, quod contingit quodam modo in gravi et levi: totum enim in eis movetur, sed parte altera principaliter movet, et e converso, ut patet ex dictis; non enim secundum totum est ipsum motum aut a se ipso motum, sed secundum partem eius, et hanc et illam. Sed tale ‘quod est se ipsum movens primo, secundum unum et idem totum movet et movetur, et eam quae est ipsius movere operationem, ad se ipsum habet, et sic motivum sui ipsius ad se ipsum conversum est.’”
primarily moved—their receptive power—and another aspect in virtue of which they primarily move—their free power. In contrast to the elements, in which the part in virtue of which they move is really distinct from the whole because it is an accident of it, in human beings and angels, these parts or aspects are distinct from the whole only in account. This is why human beings and angels move themselves as a whole and are moved as a whole. This also means that Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VII.1 does not properly apply to them: in them, what is taken to be a part is only an aspect of these beings which ontologically is the same as them.\(^{98}\) Note, however, that the ontological status of the powers of the soul and that of the powers of the elements would not be a ground for denying that only the will is primarily self-moving. To get to this conclusion, Henry must also assume that all powers are the same as the essence, that is, even accidental powers are the same as the essence of these accidents. While the power of the will is the power of the human soul, the same as the soul and not an accident of it, the power of an element is the same as that element’s accidental form of lightness or heaviness—it is neither a power of a substantial form of the element, nor is it the power of the *suppositum*.

Remember, however, that although in the will of humans and angels, the aspects in virtue of which they are the mover and the moved are less distinct than in the case of elements, these aspects are still more distinct that they are in God. In God, the distinction between the mover and the moved is only rational. This explains why the self-motion of the will is still less genuine than the self-motion of God.

### 5.5. Conclusion
The aim of this chapter was to analyze how Henry of Ghent responded to Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VII.1. At the core of that argument was the idea that nothing can be a genuine self-mover because nothing moves itself *per se* and primarily. Any alleged self-mover would need to have parts that are moving at the same time, but being distinct, one can move while the other is at rest. If this is

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\(^{98}\) To my knowledge, Henry never explicitly gives this explanation for why the will primarily moves itself, but given what he says in *Quodl.* X, q. 9 while quoting Macrobius, namely, that there is no real distinction between the mover and the moved in the self-moving soul, Henry must have thought of this explanation. Ibid., 235: “solvit Macrobius in fine libri sui dicens sic: ‘Aristoteles animam non solum ex se moveri, sed nec moveri penitus conatur asserere. Plato autem dicit ex se moveri animam, non a causa quae intra se latet, ut moventur animalia et arbores, sed ita dicit animam ex se moveri, ut non aliam causam vel extrinsecus accidentem vel intrinsecus latentem. Anima enim per se movetur ut ignis per se calet, motu essentiae conveniente. Sed Aristoteles etiam motuum genera in ipsa quae rerum in quibus alius est quod movetur, alius quodmovet, cum nihil horum in anima cadere possit, in qua nulla discretion est moventis et moti.’”
possible, then the alleged self-mover would end up moving or being moved only in virtue of one of its parts and not essentially and primarily. As I discussed in chapter 2, ancient and medieval authors
(for example, Simplicius and Thomas Aquinas) agree that the argument has limitations: self-motion
cannot be attributed essentially and primarily to material wholes for these wholes have quantitative
distinct parts; thus, since motion takes time, these beings cannot move themselves with all their parts
in an instant.

Henry’s reply to Aristotle relies on Averroes’s suggestion that in self-motion, the parts of an
alleged self-mover are not quantitative parts. Things can move themselves in virtue of parts that are
distinct only in definition, such as soul and body in an animal. In principle, this suggestion seems to
allow for material things to become self-movers. However, this does not happen, for although parts
are not necessarily distinct in quantity, Henry recognizes that there are other kinds of distinctions
between these parts that might prohibit a thing from being a self-mover. Depending on the nature of
the distinctions, some things comply more with the requirements for genuine self-motion than others.
For example, elements are not in the end genuine self-movers—they are essentially self-movers, but
not primarily, because one of their relevant parts is an accidental form of them. Human beings and
angels are both essentially and primarily self-movers because their parts are only intentionally distinct
from themselves.

Two features of Henry’s view about self-motion need special emphasis. The first is his view
that only God is a perfect self-mover. With this view, Henry goes beyond Aristotle’s requirement for
genuine self-motion. In fact, he seems to add an extra criterion for what accounts for perfect self-
motion: not only is a perfect self-mover primarily and essentially a self-mover, but such a self-mover
is also the full account of its act. This happens only in God: in Him, the powers are always with the
act, which is not an entity other than the power or essence; moreover, He does not need any help
from outside to have His act. No other being, included created wills, is by itself the full account of its
own act. An immediate consequence of this is that beings other than God need some external help,
even if this help, in some cases, consists just in an act that is different from the power.

The second feature is Henry’s insistence that the elements are not genuine self-movers,
because they do not move themselves primarily. This is a feature that points to a problem in Henry’s
philosophy, one of his own doing. I suggested that the reason for Henry’s seemingly unreasonable
rejection of the claim that elements are primarily self-moving is his view that actions are attributed to
supposita. Henry does not seem to have anymore a good reason why this is the case. In contrast to
Aquinas, who attributes action to supposita because the power is also attributed to them, Henry
maintains that powers are the same as the essence that is said to have a power; thus some powers are the same as a substance, other are the same as an accident. But then powers that are the same as the accidents remain accidents of a suppositum, and so it is unclear why self-motion is attributed primarily to a suppositum instead of being attributed to that in virtue of which the suppositum moves.
Chapter 6 John Duns Scotus on Aristotle’s Argument from *Physics* VII.1

The previous chapter drew attention to the connection between Henry’s view about what entities are genuine and even perfect self-movers and his view about causal powers and their causal roles. Consider Henry’s view that perfect self-motion is possible only in God and his view that there are no genuine material self-movers. Henry’s view that only God is a perfect self-mover is a consequence of his distinction between two kinds of powers: ones (the divine powers) that are always with their manifestations, and thus are the complete account of these manifestations; others (created powers) that sometimes lack their manifestations, and so cannot be the full account of these manifestations. Given this, only God is a perfect self-mover precisely because He does not need anything outside himself to manifest his powers. The second view about material self-movers, a view that denies that the elements are genuine self-movers, is a consequence of Henry’s insistence that actions and passions are of the *suppositum*: although an element has the power to move itself, this power is in fact the same as an accidental feature of the element, and is really distinct from it. So no element can move itself *as a whole*.

In this chapter, I am interested in two issues: (1) whether John Duns Scotus agrees that there are genuine self-movers and (2) whether he takes material beings to be such self-movers. As we have seen in chapter 3 and 4, Scotus disagrees with Henry’s views about causal powers and their causal contributions. For example, although Scotus maintains that an essence does not act all the time, he does not say that a potency or power is not the full account of its act. Moreover, in contrast to Henry, for whom only *supposita* act and suffer, for Scotus, essences (or forms), that is, parts of *supposita*, are principles or potencies, so they act and suffer in causal interactions (and so in self-motion as well). Given these differences, it is interesting to see in more detail how different Scotus’s reply to Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VII.1 would be from that of Henry, since Henry cannot be said to have rejected this Aristotelian argument.

This chapter has three sections. In the first I will discuss Scotus’s general argument for self-change, that is, for both self-motion and self-agency. In the second, I will address a worry that Scotus raises about the possibility of self-motion. In the last section, I will explore Scotus’s reply to Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VII.1 by discussing the case of elemental self-motion.
6.1. The General Argument for the Possibility of Self-Change

In *QSM* IX, q. 14, Scotus raises the question whether something can move itself. In addressing this question, he proposes a general argument not only for how it is possible that something can move itself, but more generally for how it is possible for something to act on itself. Thus, as Henry did in *Quodl.* X, q. 9, Scotus also addresses the question of self-motion together with what I called acting on oneself.

Scotus’s argument for how something can act on itself is in the following text:

[Text 1] Anything active looks to a kind of passive thing, not to this passive thing, as its primary object. For example, what in general is able to heat, as well as any given thing that is able to heat, looks to what is able to be heated in general as its primary object, not to this or that [thing that is able to be heated]. Contrariwise, what is passive, e.g. what is able to be heated—and this as either [what is able to be heated] in general or any given thing that is able to be heated—likewise looks to what is able to heat as its primary object, not to this or that [thing that is able to heat], but [to what is able to heat] in general. It follows from these points that whatever is contained under the primary object of anything is a *per se* object of the same [thing]: whatever is able to heat looks to whatever is able to be heated as its *per se* object, and, conversely, whatever is able to be heated looks to whatever is able to heat as its *per se* object. But it is possible that (i) something be active regarding A in the same way in which something else is active regarding A, and (ii) the same [thing] be passive regarding A just as something else is passive regarding A. Therefore, that thing in the ratio ‘active’ has itself as object in the ratio ‘passive’ just as much as [it has] something else [that is passive as its object].

Before formulating the argument, we need to understand some of the technical terms that Scotus uses in [Text 1], namely the concepts of ‘*per se* object of a power’ and ‘primary object of a power’.

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1 The translation is from King, “Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change,” 238–39. See Scotus, *QSM* IX, q. 14, n. 24 (OPh 4: 631): “activum quodcumque pro primo objecto respicit passivum tale, non hoc passivum. Verbi gratia, tam calefactivum in communi quam quodcumque calefactivum pro primo objecto respicit calefactibile in communi, non hoc vel illud. Similiter e converso, passivum, ut calefactibile, et hoc sive in communi sive quodcumque calefactibile, respicit pro primo objecto calefactivum, non hoc sed in communi. Ex his sequitur quod quodlibet contentum sub primo objecto alius sit per se objectum eiusdem. Et quodcumque calefactivum respicit quodcumque calefactibile pro per se objecto; et e converso, quodcumque calefactibile, quodcumque calefactivum. Sed possibile est quod aliquid sit activum secundum a codem modo quo aliquid alius est activum secundum a; idem etiam sit passivum secundum a sicut quodcumque alius passivum est passivum secundum a. Ergo illud in ratione activi ita habet se ipsum pro objecto in ratione passivi sicut quodcumque alius.”
Consider a fire put in adequate proximity to different kinds of flammable objects such as wood, paper, or gasoline. If the conditions are right (suitable proximity, no impediments, etc.), that fire manifests its power to burn. But despite fire being able to burn different items, we still think that there is just one power for burning. What accounts in Scotus’s view for the unity of the power, that is, for the power being considered as one or as a power for a certain kind of effect, is the object to which this power is directed. The object of a power is a feature that is present in different determinate or specific forms in many items with which the power can partner to produce the effect. This feature, insofar as it is abstracted from the determinate way it is present in things is what Scotus calls the primary object of a power. It is precisely because wood, paper, and gasoline have such a feature that they can interact with fire and produce instances of burning. One might think that this feature is ‘flammability’, that is, the property of being able to be ignited. However, this is not what Scotus would say. He insists that the object of the power should not be something relational, that is, the object should not be defined in relation to the power. The reason for this restriction is that the object should allow us to say something informative about the kind of power we deal with. Or to put it slightly differently, the object of the power, despite being present in many things, picks out an actual feature in a thing; thus, we expect this feature to be understood independently from the power. ‘Flammability’ might be useful for classifications, but it does not convey much information about the kind of power fire is: it just says that some items such as paper, hay or gasoline are highly reactive to heat. So, what

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2 See Scotus *QSM* I, q. 6, n. 22 (OPh 3: 140–41): “Dico igitur [...] quod unitas objecti sensus non est aliqua unitas universalis in actu, sed aliquid unum aliqua unitate propriete—siculcit reali—[...] istud unum album magis convenit cum alto quam cum aliquo alterius generis. Unde dico quod istud unum reale praecedens actum intellectus est unum in multis, non tamen de multis.”

3 Ibid., n. 46 (OPh 3: 146): “nullum unum singularare est primum objectum potentiae sed aliquid unum in multis singularibus, quod est quodammodo universale.” On the problems discussed in Scotus’s *QSM* I, q. 6 see Giorgio Pini, “Scotus on the Objects of Cognitive Acts,” *Franciscan Studies* 66, no. 1 (2008): 281–315. In my view, the best way to understand the relation between the primary and *per se* object of a power is in terms of the determinables and determines relation. Note that one of the features of this relation is that “the increase in specificity associated with determines does not involve conjoining or otherwise combining the determinable with another property independent of the determinable.” See Jessica Wilson, “Determinables and Determinates,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2017, last accessed May 2017, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/determinate-determinables/. Thus, a determinate is not the determinable plus another property in the way, in medieval logic, a species is made up of a genus plus a specific difference.

is the non-relational feature of wood, paper, and gasoline that accounts for them being suitable partners for fire and informs us about the kind of power fire has? Chemists say that all of them contain atoms of carbon and hydrogen. The carbon-hydrogen bonding is a feature that all these materials have in common, and because it is not a relational feature, it can count as a primary object of fire’s power.5

While the primary object of a power is a common feature that is present in a specific, determinate way in many things, the per se object of the power is precisely the determinate instance of this common feature. The per se object of a power is a feature of an actually existing thing that explains why the active or passive power of that existing thing is the suitable partner for the passive or active power of another thing. For example, the per se object of fire’s power for burning is a specific composition of carbon and hydrogen that is proper to a specific piece of wood. This composition of carbon and hydrogen explains why this piece of wood is the kind of thing that can be burned. Note that the per se object is a specific, determinate instantiation of the primary object. So, in the end, the object of a power is either a common indeterminate feature that exists determinately in many things (and then it is called the primary object) or an instance of this feature as it exists determinately in one thing (and then it is called the per se object of a power).

Given this discussion about powers and their primary and per se objects, an object of a power has three explanatory roles. As a feature of a thing, it accounts for why that thing can causally interact with something else; it also explains why the thing that possesses the feature also possesses a power to causally interact with another power. Finally, it accounts for why suitable powers can causally interact. Indeed, active and passive powers are related to each other as causal partners in virtue of their objects.

The argument in [Text 1] can then be formulated in the following manner:

1. Any active power is directed to a general feature that explains why things possessing specific instances of that feature, and thus the relevant passive causal powers, are suitable causal partners for that active power; this general feature is the active power’s primary object.

2. Similarly, any passive power is directed to a general feature that explains why things possessing specific instances of that feature, and thus the relevant active causal powers, are suitable causal partners for that passive power; this general feature is the passive power’s primary object.

3. Whatever falls under the general primary object of a power, that is, any specific instance of

5 The problem of why things are flammable is more complex. Not all flammable things need to contain a carbon and hydrogen bonding. For example, sulphur also burns although it does not contain any carbon and hydrogen bonding. The reason for its flammability is the weak bonding among the atoms of the sulphur molecule, a bonding that is similar to that between carbon and hydrogen.
the general feature, is a \emph{per se} object of that power.

4. Let A and B be things with similar active and passive powers for \( \varphi \).

5. From (1), it follows that A’s and B’s active power for \( \varphi \) is directed to a general feature that explains the suitability of the passive powers for \( \varphi \) in A and in B.

6. From (3), it follows that if A and B possess the instantiated features to which their active and passive powers are directed, then A and B can be the \emph{per se} objects to which their powers are directed.

7. But then, if A’s active power for \( \varphi \) can take as its \emph{per se} object the relevant instantiated feature in B, it can also take as its \emph{per se} object the same feature in itself. The same can be argued about B’s active power.

8. Therefore, A can be a self-mover. For the same reason, B can also be a self-mover.

Scotus makes the point that if two things have the relevant active and passive powers to mutually cause a certain feature in each other, then each of those things is in principle able to be a self-mover, that is, to cause that feature in itself. For example, if A can cause heat in B, while B can also cause heat in A, then A and B have both active and passive powers for heat, and so they can be self-movers. However, although in this general way self-motion is possible for any kind of thing that has both active and passive powers for the same feature, in reality, self-motion occurs only in certain cases. For example, some agents—more precisely, univocal agents—cannot be self-movers, despite having both an active and a passive power for the same property \( \varphi \). The reason is that the feature in virtue of which univocal agents have an active causal power for \( \varphi \) is precisely the feature in virtue of which the thing’s passive power for \( \varphi \) cannot manifest itself. So, if these agents caused something in themselves or if they were to take themselves as the \emph{terminus} of their action, then they would be causing what they already have. This is so because in Aristotle’s physics, while an object has a feature, it cannot receive another instance of that same feature; thus, if an univocal agent were to cause a feature in itself, it would cause precisely that feature in virtue of which it acts—it would be its own cause with respect to that feature. For example, a hot thing causes heat in virtue of already being hot: since it is no longer possible for the hot thing to become hot, it means that if the hot thing were to cause heat in itself, it would cause the same heat in virtue of which it causes heat. Given this, not surprisingly, Scotus argues that self-motion is possible only in some equivocal agents, namely those equivocal agents that also have a passive power for receiving the feature that one of their active powers causes and at the same

\footnote{See Scotus, \textit{Qm} IX, q 14, n. 31 (Oph 4: 634): “Sed tantum videtur inveniendi idem respectu eiusdem secundum idem esse activum et passivum, sicut idem respectu sui.”}
time lack that feature. Such agents have a feature (a) that allows them to cause another feature and at the same time (b) allows them to be the terminus of this instance of causation; that is, such agents can receive that property that they can cause.

Scotus’s general argument for self-change fits with his understanding of principiation as the mutual manifestation of active and passive powers. If principiation is about complementary powers manifesting together, self-change must also involve the mutual manifestation of active and passive powers. Thus, the argument first explains that powers mutually react in virtue of their objects, which refer to features in their bearers. Next, the argument shows that the same one thing can have features in virtue of which its active and passive powers can mutually manifest to cause something in itself.

Behind Scotus's arguments for the possibility of self-motion lies a simple idea: nothing in the account of power prohibits self-motion. If self-motion is sometimes not possible, this is due to other considerations. For example, it can happen either because things have the relevant active and passive powers precisely because of the feature to which the power is directed (as in the case of univocal agents, which cannot manifest their power in those conditions because if they did, that would mean that something would be its own cause) or because things lack entirely the feature to which the power is directed (as in the case of some equivocal agents such as the sun, which, according to medieval physics, is able to cause heat, but not to be made hot).

Once Scotus gives this general argument for the possibility of self-change, he discusses two cases of self-change: self-motion and what I identified as self-agency. Scotus agrees with Henry that a substance can cause in itself some of its accidents. Like Henry, Scotus distinguishes these accidents

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7 See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 14, n. 31 (OPh 4: 634): “Ex istis, descendendo in generali, patet quod dicta ratio non probat idem posse in se agere nisi actione aequivoca, et hoc quando est capax formae quae nata est terminare actionem aequivocam formae activae iam habitae.”

8 Ibid.: “Et ita tenendum est regulariter quod solum et universaliter tum potest aliqui in se agere quando duo ista concurrunt: sedit quod habet formam quae est principium agendi aequivoco, et quando cum hoc est capax termini talis actionis.”

9 For Scotus's view on principiation see chapter 3, especially section 3.2.3.

10 Scotus explicitly rejects that a substance can cause another substantial form in itself. See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 14, n. 32 (OPh 4: 634): “Descendendo igitur in speciali, ex hoc patet primo quod nihil agit in se causando formam substantalem, quia nulla de nouo potest aduenire ut faciat compositum unum per se, quin illa sit perfectior quamcunque entitate praeecedente ipsam; imperfectius autem non est principium actuum respectu perfectionis.” The reason why Scotus raises this issue is that (1) in his view substantial forms can cause other substantial forms, and more importantly, (2) he accepts that in a composite there can be a plurality of substantial forms. The reason why nothing can cause another substantial form in itself is that the new substantial form should make a per se one composite with the previous forms. But this would be possible only if the new substantial form were more perfect than the form that is caused. Since nothing that is less perfect can cause something more perfect, nothing can cause a substantial form in itself.
into two kinds: some that are coeval with their subject—corresponding to what Henry calls accidents that are always the case—and some accidents that are not coeval with their subject—corresponding to what Henry calls accidents that are not always the case.

The causation of coeval accidents covers the causation of necessary and inseparable accidents—the case of self-agency.\(^\text{11}\) Recall that the possibility of self-agency was a controversial issue in medieval philosophy. Medieval authors agree that necessary and inseparable accidents need to be caused, because they have their own being and essence distinct from the being and essence of the substantial form in which they inhere, but they disagree on the nature of the causation of these accidents. To understand Scotus’s discussion of the possibility of self-agency, and, as we will see further in this chapter, to understand other issues related to Scotus’s defence of the possibility of self-change, it is useful to refer to Godfrey of Fontaines’s criticism of Henry of Ghent’s views. Against Henry, who posited that a substance is the efficient cause of its accidents, Godfrey proposes a different view in *Quodl.* VIII, q. 2:

[Text 2] In no way can a substance be properly called an agent of its accidents, neither a principal [agent], nor an instrumental one. […] But it is true that for accidents to be created and to exist, a substance in act is necessary not, however, as if it were in the genus of an efficient cause, but only as a material cause; in the same way in which for a substantial form to be produced and to exist, prime matter is necessary.\(^\text{12}\)

In [Text 2], Godfrey rejects two views that posit that a substance has a kind of efficient causality with respect to its accidents. According to the first view, a substance is the efficient cause of its accidents by producing them in being, that is, by being a principal agent. This is Henry’s view. According to the second view, a substance is just an inert instrument of a generator. This view requires that while the

\(^{11}\) See Scotus, *QDM* IX, q. 14, n. 35 (OPh 4: 635): “De coaevo patet in subiecto et propria passione.” It is important to distinguish between necessary accidents or *propria* and the *propria passiones entis,* the transcendentals. The *passiones entis* are not caused, although they are necessarily concomitant features of being. One way to explain why they are not caused is to insist that they are not the right kind of entities to be caused, for they are only formally distinct from their subject. But a more important reason might be that there is no agent to cause them: they are necessary features of being as such, not of a specific being.

generator is the true cause of these first accidents, a substance nevertheless needs to be present for the accidents to be brought about by the generator. With this view, Godfrey probably has in mind Giles of Rome, who claims that a substance is that through which the generator causes the accidents. Against Henry and Giles, Godfrey points out that a substance is just the material cause of all its accidents. To explain what he means, Godfrey compares the relation of a substance to its propria and inseparable accidents to the role of matter in a hylomorphic composite. He suggests that as matter is a substratum for form, so substance is required as a substratum for its accidents. A substance needs to exist for the accidents to inhere (be predicated of) it. Since Godfrey does not give any explicit argument for his view, it must be that he considers his view to be the common-sense position and so the burden of proof lies with the proponents of the views that a substance is an efficient cause, principal or instrumental. Indeed, in contrast to Henry or Giles, Godfrey appeals to the more parsimonious explanation: the substance is just a material cause. However, Godfrey's position should explain the same worries that the self-agency view can.

Against Godfrey's position, Scotus argues that one needs to posit that a substantial form is the efficient cause of its necessary accidents as well. If this were not the case, then there would be no way to explain why a certain accident necessarily follows its subject. A substance that is only the material cause of its accidents is a substance that has only a receiving potency. But receiving potencies do not necessitate their acts: they can exist either with them or without them. Consider a pot that has a potency to get hot: does the pot necessitate that heat inhere in it? No, such a pot can exist both when it is not hot as well as when it is hot. In this sense, any receiving potency is a potency for contradictory states. Thus, a substance that has only such a receiving potency will not necessitate its first accidents, that is, its necessary or inseparable accidents.

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13 See Giles of Rome, Quodl. VI, q. 12 (Nempaeus 1646: fol. 395): “Subjectum ergo non est id, quod agit talia accidentia, sed dicitur id, quo aguntur quia huismodi subjectum complectitur materiam et formam mediante qua talia accidentia a generante efficiente causantur. Per quod patet quomodo subiectum coincidat cum efficiente? Quia si velimus explicare causam efficientem ut sit solum id quod agit et efficit de quo principaliter dicitur ratio efficientis, sic subiecto, modo, […] coincidit cum huismodi causa.”

14 See also Godfrey of Fontaines, Questo disputata 12 in Wippel, “Godfrey of Fontaines: Disputed Questions 9, 10 and 12,” 369.

15 See Scotus, QJM IX, q. 14, n. 35 (OPh 4: 635): “Primo quia potentia receptiva, differens ab actu, numquam ex se necessitatur ad actum; est enim talis quaelibet potentia contradictionis. Subiectum ex se necessario determinatur ad passionem; aliquin inhaerentia passionis per quid siue per principio subjecti non demonstraretur, quia demonstratio est necessarii.” The claim that a passive potency is a potency for opposites is based on Aristotle’s Metaphysics IX.8, 1050b8.
The second argument that Scotus brings for the causation of necessary accidents is based on his understanding of the process of generation. According to Scotus, for Thomas Aquinas and Godfrey, a substantial form plays a causal role in generation only insofar as its accidents play a causal role: these accidents act in virtue of the substance to bring about what is generated, namely a new substantial form. Moreover, what has caused the new substantial form will also cause the necessary accidents of this substantial form. Thus, given this understanding of Aquinas’s and Godfrey’s views about the causal role of substantial forms, what generates the new substantial form and its necessary accidents is in fact an accident (or several accidents) acting in virtue of a substantial form. In contrast to Aquinas and Godfrey, Scotus argues for the view that a substantial form plays an efficient causal role in any kind of generation. But if substantial forms can cause other substances, there is no longer any reason to maintain that the generator or the substantial form of the generator causes the necessary accidents of the substance generated.

In QSM, Scotus argues that the necessary accidents must be caused, through self-acting, by a form in the generated thing, without arguing that this form is necessarily a substantial one. On this issue he adduces two considerations. First, some accidents such as quantity or place cannot be univocally caused: for example, a large thing cannot cause a large thing. Thus, they need to be caused either by a substance or by another kind of accidental form. Even if one rules out the case that it is caused by a substantial form, being caused by an accidental form will also allow for self-agency. This is so because if the necessary accident is caused by another accidental form, this other form will be either the one in the generator or another accident in the new substantial form. But for the same reason that it can cause something while inhering in the generator, that accident should also be able to cause the same feature while being in the generated substance. So, necessary accidents that cannot be caused univocally are always caused through self-agency, either by the substantial form of the generated thing or by another accidental form of the same thing. Second, when the accidental form

16 On Aquinas’s view about generation see above note 27 in chapter 4. For Godfrey’s view on how the generator is the cause of necessary accidents see Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodl. VIII, q. 2 (PhB 4: 29). In my view, Scotus misunderstands important aspects of Aquinas’s and Godfrey’s position. However, he is not the first one to do this. Henry of Ghent also understands Aquinas’s position in this way, as it can be seen from how he discusses it in Quodl. III, q. 14. Nevertheless, by defending the view about the causal contribution os substantial forms, both Henry and Scotus depart in significant ways from the position of Aquinas (and Godfrey).

17 See Scotus, QdM IX, q. 14, n. 36 (OPh 4: 636): “arguitur: quando passio non est forma actiua, sicut de quantitate consequente substantiam corpoream genitam, si generans acquisuoce illam causat, quaero per quid? Per a? In genitio est a eiusdem rationis cum a in generante et prior naturaliter ipsa quantitate, quia in generante poneretur prior natura quantitate in ipso. Forma actiua, prior naturaliter forma induciibili ab ipsa in receptuo, potest esse principium inducendi illam in illo.
is a form that can be caused univocally, then it is caused by the substantial form of the generated thing. The accident cannot be caused by the corresponding accident in the generator. This is so because the active form in the generator plays a role in the alteration up to the moment of the eduizing of the new substantial form. But then it must stop, for the new accident cannot be produced through alteration. The reason is that alteration requires the presence of the opposite form that will be replaced by the new accidental form, but immediately after the substantial form is generated, there is no opposite form in the newly generated thing to be replaced. The accident does not need to be caused by the substantial form of the generator, for the same form is also present in the generated thing—there is no reason why this new form cannot cause the accident, given that the same kind of form in the generator can.

The causation of coeval accidents remains a strange case of causation. First, it is a case in which something is caused not only without alteration, but also without change. In contrast to alteration, change does not necessarily require the presence of an opposite form, but it requires the privation of a form. So, if the substance were to lack these necessary accidents, this would be sufficient for the causation of necessary accidents to count as a case of change. But Scotus denies that there is a privation of the necessary accidental forms in the substance. The reason is that privations are identified in time. Thus, if a substance were without its necessary accidents, this would happen in a temporal moment prior to the causation of the new accidental form, but temporally posterior to the constitution of subject that will undergo the change. But there is no temporal moment at which a generated substance exists without its necessary accidents. Second, although the causation of coeval accidents is without change, it is a case of causation. In fact, the causation of necessary accidents falls

Prioritas enim temporis non requiritur patet de luminoso et lumine nec distantia localis, ut supra probatum est. Ergo ita, uel magis, genitum causabit in se talem passionem quam generans.”

18 Ibid.: “Si enim generans fingatur agens respectu passionis geniti, patet quod non uniuoce per passionem in generante, maxime si illa passio non est forma activa. Si etiam est activa, uidetur idem quod, licet illa qualitas in tempore praecedente ultimam generationem fuit principium alterandi subjectum, tamen illius alterationis in ultimo instanti non manet, sed fit alius. Quomodo in illo alio habebit actionem instantaneam sine motu alterationis facto in illo?”

19 Ibid.: “patet quod dictum est, coaevum causari sine mutatione, quia mutatio requirit terminos oppositos, et ita privationem praecedere formam. Privatio non praecedit nisi quando subjectum aptum praecedit formam; hic non sic.”

20 See Scotus, QM IX, q. 11, n. 6 (OPh 4: 605): “omnis mutatio proprie dicta est inter terminos oppositos: privationem et formam. Illa non sunt simul tempore in eodem, patet. Nec privatio praecedit tempore formam nisi susceptivum praecedat eam, quia in non-susceptivo non est privatio. Ad nullum ergo formam est mutatio nisi quam praecedit tempore suum susceptivum.”
under what Scotus considers accidental change or change only in name.\textsuperscript{21} This kind of change shares with genuine change two aspects: on the one hand, in both cases something is brought about; on the other hand, and more importantly, in both cases there are active and passive potencies involved. But there is also an important difference: while during a change, the passive power for a certain accident is linked with the potentiality for the subject to be in a certain way, in the case of the causation of necessary accidents there is no such potentiality for these accidents, because at no point is the substance without them—the substance has only a power for these accidents. As in cases of genuine change, in self-agency, the passive power of a substance for its necessary accidents is related to the accidents themselves (what is caused), to what causes them (an active principle of the substance), and to a form, by which Scotus probably means the substantial form. Recall that for Scotus, any passive principle enters three different relations: to what is caused, to what causes (or the active principle), and to a form.\textsuperscript{22} So Scotus ends with the claim that self-agency is a case of causation in which there is a mutual manifestation of passive and active potencies for the same end, without necessarily being a potentiality for that end,\textsuperscript{23} for the substance is never in potentiality to its necessary accidents.

The causation of necessary accidents bears some similarities with Henry’s understanding of how the active and passive powers are together with their acts in God.\textsuperscript{24} In God, there is passive power for receiving the divine acts, but there is no potentiality precisely because there is no moment at which the power is without the act. Similarly, in the causation of necessary accidents, Scotus describes the passive potency for receiving these accidents as being without any potentiality because there is no temporal moment at which the substance is without these accidents.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., (OPh 4: 605–606): “Quia multae formae necessario simul sunt cum propriis susceptivis, ideo sine mutatione insunt. Solummodo autem potest esse mutatio per accidentes aliquid, in quantum est ad aliquid, quod est praeus ea naturaliter, et quasi ratio receptivi. Hoc modo, quaecumque forma non est nata sequi tempore esse sui proprii susceptivi, non est nata terminare mutationem. Quae autem non sequeretur, tamen quantum est de se nata sequi, non terminaret mutationem, licet nata esset terminare. Quando ergo arguitur ex definitione motus, non valet, quia ibi sumitur ‘potentia’ opposita ‘actui’; ubi autem illa est in susceptivo, bene conceditur mutatio. Sed licet illa non sit, bene potest esse potentia passiva secundum triplicem eius respectum, qui dictus est in solutione istius quaestionis, scilicet ad principiatum, ad agens et ad formam. Nam uterque istorum inest quando est in composito; tertius inest in instanti primo quo forma inest, licet etiam sine mutatione insit.” If one wonders where Scotus talks about the lack of potentiality for the necessary accidents, the answer is when he refers to the potency that is opposed to act—by this, he means ‘subjective potency’, a concept that I will discuss in the next chapter. See section 7.6 below.

\textsuperscript{22} The relationships of a passive principle are discussed in chapter 3, section 3.2.3 above.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid. (OPh 4: 606): “Potest tamen potentia activa esse alicuius termini, et potentia passiva similiter, cuius non praefuit potentia opposita actui, et ideo nce mutatio est ad illum.”

\textsuperscript{24} See chapter 4, sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.
Non-coeval accidents are those accidents that a thing does not have at all moments, but can cause in itself. These accidents encompass what medieval philosophers, following Aristotle, consider to be perfections of the things in which they inhere. In Aristotelian philosophy, things have ends or perfections. For example, the operation or end or perfection of a stone is to rest at the centre of the earth, which is its natural place; human beings’ perfection is to exercise their intellectual capacities; and so on. Both Henry and Scotus agree that the causation of non-coeval accidents or self-motion is a view that must be upheld because it gives more credence to the Aristotelian idea about things having perfections. Given this view, they expect that the burden of proof for denying self-motion is on their adversaries.

In *Quodl.* XI, q. 6, Henry uses the view that things are able through their own form to cause their own operations as a reason why powers need to be the same as their bearers, and so why things can cause perfections in themselves:

**[Text 3]** It must be said that it [that is, the power] is not its accident [that is, of the substance] because every given thing is able, through the form through which it is what it is, [to perform] its own operation and [to cause] that which is produced by that [operation], as light is able to cause light and heat is able to cause heating and in the same way in each individual case. For every individual is determined to its proper operation, as is said at the end of the fourth book of *Meteorology.*

Henry’s assumption is that the ability of a thing to cause its own perfection is a view that must be upheld because it is better for things to be active than passive. In *QS* IX, q. 14, Scotus also maintains that the ability of a form to cause its own perfections must be upheld:

**[Text 4]** Finally it is in general stated that one ought not to deny of any nature a feature which, if posited, would contribute to its perfection, unless such can be shown to be lacking on other grounds. For nature “always does what is best,” when this were possible, and “is never wanting what is necessary.” Now creatures are commonly produced in existence without some perfections that they are suited by nature to attain. [...] Such things would be simply more perfect if they were endowed with an active principle for attaining what they are suited to have, for they would be less dependent upon outside help. Hence, when it is not obvious that a given

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25 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 453vX) *Dicendo quod non est accidens eius quia unumquodque per suam formam qua est id quod est, potens est in suam operationem, et in illud quod per ipsam habet produci, ut lux ad lucendum, calor ad calefaciendum, et sic de singulis. Singula enim aliqua propria operatione determinantur, ut dicitur in fine quarti Meteoroe.*
nature lacks an active principle regarding a given perfection, it must simply be conceded that it has it [the active principle], for it dignifies the nature.\textsuperscript{26}

It is better for things to be able to cause their own perfections because in this way they will depend less on other things, and so it makes things more noble. But why is this so? Here it is useful to recall how Henry discusses the concept of power. Following Aristotle and Avicenna, he argues that the most important feature of power is the ability of its bearer to be independent of the action of other things. God exemplifies best this concept of power, while prime matter with its capacity for receiving is the most remote from it. In between these extremes, there are created beings, whose power shares similarities with both God’s power and matter’s power. So, if things are to be noble, they must have power, and they have power if they depend less on other things for causing their own operations.

In this section, I have discussed several arguments that Scotus and Henry bring for the possibility of self-motion and self-agency. These arguments are of different kinds. While [Text 1] purports to show that self-change in general is possible in the same way transeunt change is possible, the other arguments defend the possibility of self-motion or self-agency because there is a need for its existence. For example, Scotus argues that the point of self-agency is to explain why some accidents are necessary for a substance, while the point of self-motion is to explain why things can attain their perfections. In the last section of this chapter, I will return to the problem of self-motion, but first let us see how Scotus addresses the argument that self-motion cannot exist because it jeopardizes the order of the universe.

6.2. The Ordered Universe and Self-Motion: Essentially Ordered Causes

As one might argue that self-motion needs to exist in a well-ordered universe, so one might also argue that if things have their own active causal powers to bring about their operations, this jeopardizes the entire order of the universe.\textsuperscript{27} Scotus deals with two objections in this vein. The first objection is directed against what Henry and Scotus say in [Text 3] and [Text 4], namely that self-motion needs

\textsuperscript{26} John Duns Scotus, \textit{A Treatise on Potency and Act}, 317., (trans. Wolter). (For the Latin text, see Scotus, \textit{Q\&M} IX, q. 14, n. 63 (OPh 4: 649–50).)

to be posited because it is a sign of a thing’s power that it can attain its perfections by itself. The objection points out that if things cause their own operations only because it dignifies them, for the same reason they should have *at once* all the perfections that are possible for them. But if this were the case, any kind of causation would become obsolete. The point of the argument seems to be that Scotus cannot argue that self-motion should be posited on the ground that it enhances the nobility of things: if enhancing things’ nobility were a ground for why God arranged the universe as He did, then things should have had all their perfections at the moment of their creation.28

The second objection that Scotus mentions is based on how active and passive powers are connected in the universe. Nature is such that in causal interactions active principles are fitted to manifest together with the passive principles of *other* things. Indeed, the suitability that exists between active and passive powers of different things accounts for the connection that exists between them. If things were endowed with powers to bring about their own perfections, then there would be no more connections between them, for the same one thing, in virtue of having the relevant active and passive powers, would be sufficient to cause all its own perfections.29 In such a universe, all things would be, so to speak, self-sufficient monads with no need to interact with anything else.

Against these two objections, Scotus’s point is that for there to be order in the universe, it is not sufficient that things enter into causal interactions; these interactions need to take certain forms. In reply to the first objection, Scotus emphasizes that things are not perfect in virtue of being the passive recipients of their perfections; they must be active either with respect to their own perfections or with respect to the perfections of other things. If things were to receive at once all their possible perfections, then they would not in fact attain their perfections: they would not be the active cause of these perfections either in themselves or in other things, for the only agent that would be able to cause them to have all perfections at once would be God. So being the active cause of its own perfections or other things’ perfections is itself a perfection of something.30 Scotus further explains why God

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29 Ibid., n. 65–66: “Item, natura proportionauit actiuum et passiuum in uniuerso, non semper idem respectu sui, sed aliuin respectu alterius, sicut uidetur maior conexio in rebus. Et ita uniuersaliter dabitur respectu perfectionis possibilis in quocumque aliquod agens, sed aliuin ab illo possibili. Confirmatur: quare enim non uniuicque dedit natura principium actiuum respectu omnis perfectionis sibi possibilis, ut sic auferatur conexio eorum secundum actionem et passionem mutanam?”

30 Ibid., n. 67 (OPh 4: 651): “Ad primum respondeo: si causalitas auferatur, non haberent omnem perfectionem cuius sunt capaces. Si autem statim quidlibet fieret uniuersaliter perfectum quantum possit perfici, nihil aliuin a producente uuderetur esse causa alicuius in alio.”
being the cause of things having their perfections at once is problematic. Sometimes, the natures of the effects that are to be produced require that their causation takes time: those effects cannot be received except in stages and degrees, and this takes time. Given this, if God were to cause all the perfections of things at once, he would need also to intervene to correct the limited powers that these things have for receiving their own perfections, which makes even more noticeable the fact that the recipients do not get perfected—they almost become something else.

In reply to the second objection, the point emphasized is that transeunt causation, of either the univocal or the equivocal sort, is not sufficient to keep the universe together and ordered. This is so because things in the universe are not simply connected in virtue of the relation between active and passive principles, as happens in univocal and equivocal causation. They are also connected in virtue of being essentially ordered causes. Given this, Scotus’s proposal is that self-motion does not jeopardize the order of the universe: for causing their own perfections, self-movers still depend essentially on the causal activity of other things.

By proposing that self-movers are connected to other things in an essential way and by emphasizing that things need to be active, Scotus engages with Henry’s idea that even created self-movers are not sufficiently powerful to bring about their own perfections by themselves. Scotus goes beyond Henry’s proposal and develops an interesting explanation for some cases of self-motion that pose problems for Henry. In what follows, I will explain Scotus’s solution in more detail by using two examples: the intellect and the will, or more precisely, the case of the causation of the act of the intellect and that of the will. The discussion of these cases might at times seem to be a diversion from the goal of this thesis; however, such a discussion will illuminate an important aspect of the self-motion problem, the role of sine qua non causes.

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31 Ibid., n. 68: “Contra: si ipsummet est causa perfectionis propriae, quare non a principio se summe perficit? Responsio: quia natura quaecumque requirit sucessionem in aliquibus operationibus propter imperfectam virtutis agentis respectu effectus producendi, ita est hic.” Why do things not get perfected? The reason can be clarified through an analogy: in the same way in which a student does not improve if the teacher writes her homework, so created things in general do not improve if God intervenes so that they can now have things that they cannot attain by their own powers.

6.2.1. Case One: The Intellect

The intellect is an active power that can cause in itself an act of cognition—in other words, the intellect is a self-mover. However, it cannot do this except together with an outside object. If the intellect alone were to cause the act of cognition, one might end with a form of innativism: how would the intellect cause all its acts of cognition by itself unless it already contained them? To avoid this possibility, Scotus proposes that the external object, acting as a partial efficient cause, having its own account in virtue of which it causes (ratio causandi), produces the act of understanding together with the intellect, acting also as a partial efficient cause and having its own account in virtue of which it acts. This means that the intellect and the object together cause the act of cognition, not as one cause, but as two distinct efficient co-causes. In the traditional Aristotelian picture, however, when two co-causes act together, they have two distinct causal roles. For example, one is an efficient cause (it has an active role), while the other is a material cause (it has a passive role). In this case, the intellect being a self-mover, plays the role of an active and passive principle. But what makes this case interesting is that there are two items that play an active role—both the object and the intellect act as two efficient causes. Thus, Scotus needs to explain how this situation is possible.

His answer is that the two partial causes are essentially ordered to their mutual effect, the act of understanding. To explain the nature of this order, Scotus considers different ways in which efficient causes can cause something together. He starts with a case in which two efficient co-causes are of the same kind. In this case, the causes are not in fact essentially ordered. His explanation is that when two co-causes are of the same kind, then one of them would in principle be sufficient to entirely

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34 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 3, pars 3, q. 2, nn. 488–89 (Vat. 3: 289): “Dico tunc quod istius intellectio non est tota causa activa obiectum, nec in se nec in sua specie. […] Nec tota causa intellectiones est anima intellectiva, vel aliquid eius formaliter.” Ibid., n. 494 (Vat. 3: 292): “si ergo nec anima sola nec obiectum solum sit causa totalis intellectio actualis […] sequitur quod ista duo sunt una causa integra respectu notitiae genitae.”

35 Ibid., n. 503 (Vat. 3: 298): “in quocumque uno ordine causae oportet ponere respectu unius effectus unam per se causam, et unam rationem per se causandi (ita intellectus in suo ordine causalitatis est unus, et habet unam rationem formalem causandi, – et species vel obiectum in suo ordine causandi est una causa specialis et habet unam rationem causandii).”
supplement the other one;\textsuperscript{36} that is, what is needed is only one of them with a suitable power strength. This further means that one of the causes is only accidentally required for the effect, for it does not contribute something essentially different or distinct in kind from the other one. This case does not apply to how the intellect co-causes with an external object the act of cognition for in the causation of this act, the two co-causes (the intellect and the object) in fact have their own kind of causal contribution to the production of the effect so that neither of them can be taken out and the effect still be produced.

Scotus discusses a second case of co-causation, one in which the two co-causes are of different kinds, each with its own causal contribution. The two causes are such that one is the instrument of the other. This means that one of the causes gives either a form, or a power, or motion to the other cause, which is its instrument.\textsuperscript{37} This case fits well with artificial instruments: these instruments receive their form, power, and motion from whoever makes or uses them. Between the instrument and the one that makes or uses the instrument, there is an essential order precisely because both causes have their own specific causal contribution to the effect. For example, although a carpenter moves a saw through his own power when cutting the wood, the form of the saw is also relevant. Note that this case of essentially ordered causes is not relevant in self-motion, for neither a self-mover nor its partner can get its form, power, or motion from the other.\textsuperscript{38}

Indeed, since the intellect is a self-mover, this kind of essential order does not capture the order between the intellect and the object, for neither does the object receive something (power, form, or motion) from the intellect, nor does the intellect receive something from the object to act. The intellect has its own form and power, while in the


\textsuperscript{37} See Scotus, \textit{Ord.} I, d. 3, pars 3, q. 2, n. 496 (Vat. 3: 293): “Quaedam non ex aequo, sed habentes ordinem essentalem, et hoc dupliciter: vel sic quod superior moveat inferiorem, ita quod inferior non agit nisi quia mota ex superiori, et quandoque causa talis inferior habet a superiore virtutem illam seu formam qua movet, quandoque non, sed formam ab alio, et a causa superiore solam motionem actuali, ad producendum effectum.”

\textsuperscript{38} A self-mover gets its power and form from a generator. However, once it has its form (and so its power), the self-mover does not require some special help to carry out its operation. Of course, this does not mean that a self-mover does not need God’s concurrence or conservation, but on this point, a self-mover is like any other created thing.
production of the act of understanding, both the intellect and the object play a role.39

It is Scotus’s third mentioned case of ordered co-causes that fits the case of the intellect and the object in the causation of the act of understanding. In this case, the two co-causes do not receive anything from each other, but they are still essentially ordered to cause something. Scotus explains very briefly that they are so ordered because in this case, one of the co-causes is such that it “is simply more perfect than the other, yet in such a way that each is perfect in its own causality, not depending on the other.”40 What distinguishes this kind of essentially ordered causes from the others is that both these causes are complete in their own causality: they have their own power, form, and motion that they contribute to the effect. But if they are not ordered because one is necessary for improving the causal contribution of the other, what is the ground for them being essentially ordered? Scotus’s explanation is not clear: he says only that the intellect and the object are co-causes in virtue of one of them being in some respect better than the other. Despite this, the description of this kind of essential ordering between causes is clear: these co-causes are essentially ordered to produce the effect, not because one of them needs something from the other to exercise its power, but because the causal input of both is needed to produce the effect.

The essential order between the object and the self-moving intellect shows that self-movers fit in an ordered universe. Partial self-movers such as the intellect essentially depend on other things for producing their effects, although they do not depend on them for having power.

6.2.2. Case Two: The Will

In what is considered an early work, Lect. II, d. 25, Scotus defends the view that the cause of the act of volition is both the will and the intellect as informed by an act of understanding. The two are partial causes between which there is an essential order, with the will being the more principal cause.41 As in

39 Ibid., n. 498 (Vat. 3: 294–95): “Concurrunt ergo ista duo ut habentia ordinem essentialem. Non tamen primo modo, quia nec intellectus dat objecto vel speciei rationem sue causalitatis – non enim objectum natum est, in se vel in specie sui, facere intellectionem per aliquid quod recipit ab intellectu, sed ex natura sua, – nec intellectus recipit suam causalitatem ab objecto vel specie objecti, sicut probatum est prima ratione contra secundam opinionem.”

40 Ibid., n. 498 (Vat. 3: 295): “Sunt ergo causae essentialiter ordinatae, et ultimo modo, videlicet quod una est simpliciter perfectior altera, ita tamen quod utraque in sua propria causalitate est perfecta, non dependentis ab alia.”

41 See Scotus, Lect. II, d. 25, q. un., n. 73 (Vat. 19: 254): “Tertio modo, aliquando plura agentia concurrunt in causando, ita quod alterius ordinis sunt aut rationis (contra primum modum), quorum neutrum capiit ab alio virtutem activam, sed utrumque habet causalitatem propriam, perfectam in suo genere, unum tamen est agens principale et aliud minus principale, ut pater et mater ad productionem prolis, et stilus et penna ad scribendum, et vir et mulier ad regimen domus. Sic in
the case of the intellect, in the case of the will, the co-causes do not depend on each other for their form, power, or motion, although they depend on each other for producing the effect. Scotus arrives at this conclusion after examining and rejecting the view of Godfrey of Fontaines, namely that the will is only passive with respect to volition,\(^{42}\) and the view of Henry of Ghent, according to whom the will is a total self-mover. In this section, I will discuss his criticism of Henry’s view in *Lect.* II, d. 25 and what seems to be his tacit approval of Henry’s view in *Reportatio* II, d. 25.\(^{43}\) What is important for us here is that in the *Reportatio*, in arguing for a new way of understanding the causation of the act of volition, Scotus posits a more fundamental type of self-mover: the will is no longer only the partial cause of its act, but now it seems to be the total cause of this act. But can this type of self-mover enter into essentially ordered causal relations?

In both the *Lectura* and the *Reportatio* versions of distinction 25, Scotus is concerned with the

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\(^{42}\) Godfrey’s view is discussed together with what seems to be Thomas Aquinas’s view. See Scotus, *Lect.* II, d. 25, q. un., nn. 25-53 (Vat. 19: 235–45).

\(^{43}\) It is important to note that Scotus seems to have moved from the view that the will is a self-mover, but only a co-cause of the act of volition (similarly to how the intellect is a self-mover but only a co-cause of the act of understanding), to a more radical view, according to which the will is a self-mover and the total cause of the act of volition. On this issue see Dumont, “Did Duns Scotus Change His Mind on the Will?” Ibid., 757. In my interpretation, Scotus never defends in *Reportatio* II, d. 25 Henry’s view about *sine qua non* causality. Although I agree with Dumont that Scotus proposes that the object is a *sine qua non* cause of the act of the will, I argue that Scotus understands the role of the object as a *sine qua non* cause differently from how Henry does. Moreover, in my opinion, even in the *Reportatio*, Scotus sets Henry against Godfrey, for the second view that Scotus discusses is the view that the object of the intellect plays the role of a final cause. Dumont has identified Olivi as one of the authors maintaining this view. (Ibid., 752). Less noticed is that Henry also posits that the object is a final cause; however, he does not think that as a final cause, the object is also a *sine qua non* cause. See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XIII, q. 11 (Leuven 18: 98): “[...] quia obiecti intellectus praesentia in intellectu et determinatio per ipsum non est necessaria voluntati ad eliciendum actum volendi nisi sicut causa sine qua non. Sed tamen ut causa propter quam sic, finales scilicet est necessaria ad actum volitionis terminandum, et sic potius propter ipsum actum quam propter voluntatem eliciendam – quia incognita velle non possimus –, eo quod actum volendi non possimus terminare, nisi ad cognitum. Quod tamen non ut cognitum sed magis ut res terminat actum volendi ut sic bonum cognitum, ut per sui similitudinem est in intellectu, praeivium est actui volendi et movens voluntatem tantum metaphoricum.” On Henry’s view about the object as a final cause, see also section 5.4 in chapter 5.
relation between cognized objects and volitions. For the will to be free, it must be the sole efficient cause of its volitions. This requirement is in tension with another one, namely, that volitions have a content—thoughts are about something, which they represent in a certain way to the person who thinks; similarly, volitions should also represent something in a certain way, namely as desirable or undesirable, to the person who wills.\textsuperscript{44} Scotus claims that to have their content fixed, volitions essentially depend on the objects a person considers. For this to happen, he suggests two possibilities: volitions must either be related to these objects as what is posterior to what is prior, or be efficiently caused by them.\textsuperscript{45}

In the \textit{Lectura}, Scotus maintains that volitions are efficiently caused by cognized objects, with the will as a partial efficient co-cause. In arguing for this, he dismisses Henry’s view that cognized objects are \textit{sine qua non} causes in the causation of volitions. He rightly understands Henry to say that the cognized object (as a \textit{sine qua non} cause) is a remover of an impediment, namely, the intellect’s ignorance of that object.\textsuperscript{46} But Scotus does not think that the cognized object, understood as a remover of an impediment, can guarantee that a volition will essentially depend on it for its content. In fact, Scotus claims that this dependence is secured only when volitions are efficiently caused by cognized objects. So his rejection of Henry’s view is not surprising: Henry’s \textit{sine qua non} causes are not efficient causes of an effect.

\textsuperscript{44} There are two issues with this explanation. The first issue concerns the claim that volitions need to have mental content. I make this claim because Scotus mentions the relation of measure to measured in relation to volitions. In his discussion of acts of cognition, Scotus discusses this relation and distinguishes it from the relation of \textit{tendere}. Richard Cross has argued, persuasively in my opinion, that the first relation concerns the mental content of an act of cognition, while the second refer to the intentionality of the act. See Cross, \textit{Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition}, 150–70. Thus, given that in \textit{Lect.} II, d. 25, q. un., Scotus says that cognized objects measure the act of volition, he must maintain that volitions need to have mental content. The second issue concerns my explanation for how volitions have content. I have explained how volitions have content on the model of how thoughts have mental content. But then one might raise the question about how the way of representing the object as desirable by the intellect is different from the way the will represents the object as desirable. I do not have a good answer to this: my intuition is to consider how the phenomenology of volition is different from that of thinking, an aspect on which I am not sure Scotus says much. These issues, although very important and philosophically interesting, are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{45} See Scotus, \textit{Lect.} II, d. 25, q. un., n. 66 (Vat. 19: 251): “actus volendi essentialiter refertur ad obiectum ut mensuratum ad mensuram, et non e contra (ex hoc enim quod lapis est volitus, non dependet a voluntate); sed mensuratum dependent a mensura vel sicut causatum posterius refertur ad causatum prius, vel sicut causatum ad causam. […] Non autem dependet actus voluntatis ab obiecto cognito ut a causato priore; igitur sicut a causa, et non est dare nisi in respectu causae efficientis.”

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., n. 54 (Vat. 19: 246): “Alia opinio, Gandavi, extrema est, quod sola voluntas est causa effectiva respectu actus volendi, et obiectum cognitum est tantum causa ‘sine qua non’, et intellectus intelligens ‘amotio impedimenti’; et ideo dicunt quod obiectum cognitum est ‘sine quo non’ et intellectus intelligens ut amovens impedimentum: si enim obiectum non habet ‘esse cognitum’ in intellectu, non erit volitio, si etiam intellectus non intelligat, voluntas non potest velle, quia tune impeditur.”
Scotus’s argumentation in the Lectura suffers from at least two problems. First, it is not clear why the essential dependence between objects and volitions is not secured in terms of prior and posterior, since he himself has suggested that such dependence can be secured in this way. Second, it is not clear why Henry’s view is not a version of the prior-posterior dependence, since a *sine qua non* cause is prior to its effect. These two problems are clarified in the Reportatio. In replying to one of Godfrey of Fontaines’s arguments against Henry, Scotus says:

[Text 5] I say that there is necessarily a certain priority of nature, which is not the priority of the cause with respect to its effect, because according to those arguing in this manner, the intellection is necessarily prior in nature to the volition, and, however, it is not in any of the kinds of [Aristotelian] cause; therefore this is necessarily required as a *sine qua non*, while the *per se* causes, such as the active and passive [principles], are not sufficient for [the effect] to be. This priority must be posited because of the order among powers, and yet the lower power is not a cause of the higher power. [...] Therefore, I say that when one effect is posterior to another effect, but neither has the account of cause with respect to the other, the posterior effect is dependent on its proper cause, and on the prior effect, as if on a *sine qua non* cause. For the whole ray is immediately from the sun by an immediacy of cause, and yet the more remote part cannot be from the sun unless the prior part is prior in nature. Therefore, properly speaking about the dependency of an effect on that which gives being to it, an effect depends as if on the *per se* causes; speaking, however, about that on which it depends as if on something necessarily required, it depends on that as if on something *sine qua non*.47

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47 See Scotus, *Rep. Par.* II, d. 25, q. un., n. 15 (Vivès 23: 125): “Dico quod necessario est aliqua prioritas naturae quae non est prioritas causae respectu effectus quia secundum sic arguentes, intellectio est necessario prius natura volitione, et tamen non in aliquo genere causae; igitur tale sine qua non necessario praexigitur; et non sufficient causae per se ad fieri, ut activa et passiva. Iam prioratem oportet ponere, propter ordinem potentialium et tamen potentia inferior non est causa superioris. [...] Dico igitur quod quando unus effectus est posterior alio effectu, et neuter habet rationem causae respectu alterius, posterior effectus habet dependentiam ad causam propriam et ad effectum priorem, tamen ad sine qua non. Unde totus radius est immediate a Sole immediatamente causae et tamen non potest fieri pars remotor a Sole nisi prius natura fiat pars prior. Proprie igitur loquendo de dependentia effectus ad illud quod dat sibi esse effectus tantum dependet ex causis per se; loquendo tamen de illo ad quod dependet tantum necessario praeactum, dependet ad illud tanquam ad aliquid sine quo non.” The Oxford Merton containing Reportatio II-A is slightly different. See Scotus, *Rep.* II-A, Oxford Merton, MS 61, fol 193v: “Dico quod necessario est aliqua prioritas naturae quae non est prioritas causae respectu effectus quia secundum sic arguentes, intellectio est necessario prius natura volitione, et tamen non in aliquo genere causae; igitur tale sine quo non necessario praexigitur; et non sufficient causae per se ad fieri, uti activa et passiva istam prioritatem oportet ponere, propter ordinem potentialium et tamen potentia inferior non est causa superioris. [...] Dico igitur quod non quando effectus est posterior alio effectu, et neuter habet rationem causae respectu alterius, posterior effectus habet
In contrast to the Lectura, Scotus here suggests that (1) volitions essentially depend on cognized objects as what is posterior depends on what is prior, and that (2) these objects play the role of *sine qua non* causes. Despite appearances, however, Scotus does not agree with Henry.

[Text 5] proposes the following understanding of *sine qua non* causes: A is a *sine qua non* cause for an effect E iff (1) A is necessarily prior in nature to E’s *per se* causes (the relevant active and passive powers for E) and (2) A is not one of the four Aristotelian causes with respect to E. The cognized object or the intellect informed by an act of understanding is a *sine qua non* cause of the volition because it is an antecedent that is essentially required for the volition to be caused: the nature of the will requires that the intellect be previously cognizant of a certain object. But this understanding of *sine qua non* causes is different from how Henry explains *sine qua non* causes.

Removers of impediments as Henry understands them are not prior in nature to an effect’s *per se* causes, although they are *sine qua non* causes. For Henry, a remover of an impediment is necessarily prior to E and it is not, with respect to E, a cause in the Aristotelian sense (although it is such a cause with respect to the impediment). For example, if a stone were impeded by the presence of a column, then if a builder is a remover of the column that impedes the falling of a stone, the builder’s action is necessarily prior to the falling of the stone. But although necessarily prior to E, Henry’s removers of impediments are not prior in nature to E or its *per se* causes, for neither the nature of the remover nor that of E makes the remover necessarily prior to E. For example, the nature of the builder does not make him necessarily prior to the falling on the stone, nor does the nature of that which causes the fall of the stone make it cause the falling of the stone when the builder removes the column.

Scotus is aware that Henry’s understanding of *sine qua non* causes as removers of impediments cannot account for the essential dependence of objects on volitions. Indeed, in the same question of dependentiam ad causam propriam et ad effectum priorem, tantquam ad sine quo non. Unde totus radius est immediate a sole immediatione causeae et tamen non potest fieri pars remotor a sole nisi prius natura pars prior. Proprie igitur loquendo de dependentia effectus ad illud quod dat sibi esse effectus tantum dependet ex causis per se; loquendo tamen de illo ad quod dependet tanquam necessario exactum dependent ad illud quod est sine quo non.”

See also Scotus, Op. Ox. II, d. 25, q. un, n. 19 (Vivès 13: 212): “Dico […] quod oportet in hac materia etiam secundum eos dare aliquid prius quod tamen non sit causa efficiens sed sit causa sine qua non. […] Intelectio enim secundum eum est prior natura volitione tamen in nullo genere causae se habet respectu volitionis quando enim aliquis effectus praecedit alium effectum ordine naturae non potest causa exire in actum causandi effectum posteriorem non prius causato effectu priori illa prioritate. Exemplum: Sol non potest illuminare postierorem partem mediis nisi prius natura illuminet partem propinquorum tamen pars propinqua non habet aliquam rationem respectu illuminationis magis distantis quia et ipsa illuminatur a Sole immediatione causaae. Unde est quod phantasiatio, vel obiectum apprehensionem requiratur ad hoc quod sit volitio, non tamen requiritur, nisi siet causa sine qua non.”
the Reportatio, Scotus briefly discusses how removers of impediments are *sine qua non* causes. He comments that in this case, the *sine qua non* cause would be a *per accidens* cause. (Recall that Henry also says that *sine qua non* causes are a kind of *per accidens* cause.) As a *per accidens* cause, the remover of an impediment cannot be prior in nature or perfection to the *per se* causes of the effect. However, it can be temporally prior: first an impediment must be removed, and then the *per se* causes can cause the effect. If one interprets Scotus in the Reportatio as agreeing with Henry’s view of *sine qua non* causes, one must also agree that this view (the object is a *sine qua non* cause, that is, a *per accidens* cause, which is only temporally prior to the effect and its *per se* causes) is Scotus’s view. But Scotus’s explanation in [Text 5] is not this: against Godfrey, he insists that the *sine qua non* cause must be not just temporally prior to the *per se* causes of the effect, but also prior in nature.

Does the difference between Henry’s and Scotus’s view lie in one taking removers of impediments to be *sine qua non* causes while the other does not? No, for it is possible for removers of impediments to be *sine qua non* causes in Scotus’s sense. Consider a case in which there is something in the nature of a power that makes it dependent on a remover of an impediment. In this case, the impediment is something that essentially impedes the manifestation of a *per se* cause.

[Text 5]

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48 See Scotus, Rep. Par. II, d. 25, q. un., n. 19 (Vivès 23: 127): “Dico quod omnis causa per se est prior causa per accidens, vel natura, vel perfectione. Non autem semper origine prior, quia prior origine est amotio probibentis quam motus gravis deorum, tamen ipsum est prius, sed non prius movet se, quam amoveatur prohibens.” Note that this reply is given when Scotus engages with the view (defended by Olivi and Henry) that posits that the object is a final cause with respect to volitions, that is, that the object is one of the four Aristotelian causes with respect to volitions. In this context, Scotus agrees that such an object is a *sine qua non* cause. Ibid. “Ad primum pro secunda opinione, cum dicitur quod balneum in anima movet ut efficis, si sustinatur quod objectum movet effici constantem, licet non sit causa totalis, tunc potest sustineri quod balneum movet ut efficis extra, ut fines. Sustinendo tamen quod sit tantum sine qua non, et nullo modo movens effective, tunc oportet glossare quod non movet effective per se, sed per accidens.” This complicates the way Scotus organizes the views in the Reportatio. In my opinion, Scotus there discusses two positions about the role of the object, that of Godfrey and that of Olivi and Henry. In reply to Godfrey, he mentions an understanding of *sine qua non* causes that is different from Henry’s, and it seems to be related to Godfrey’s own view about the role of phantasms in cognition. (See the beginning of [Text 5].) In reply to the arguments against the view of Olivi and Henry, Scotus agrees that the object as a final cause can be a *sine qua non* cause. In explaining what kind of *sine qua non* cause the object would be, Scotus refers to the role of removers of impediments in causation. This explanation of *sine qua non* causes is closer to Henry’s view, with the important difference that for Henry, the object as a final cause is not a *sine qua non* cause. (So Scotus seems to have conflated two roles that Henry thought of keeping apart: the object plays the role of a *sine qua non* cause in the eliciting of the act and the role of a final cause in the termination of the act.) Does Scotus agree with the view of Olivi and Henry? It is not clear to me that he does, for if he is looking for a way to secure the essential dependence of volitions on cognitive objects, then the view that *sine qua non* causes are *per accidens* causes does not seem to be able to do that.

49 There is a second reason why this cannot be Scotus’s view. If it were, then he would agree with Olivi and Henry that the object is the final cause with respect to volitions. But remember that in rejecting Godfrey’s view, he says that the object is not one of the four Aristotelian causes with respect to the effect.

50 Note, however, that Scotus seems skeptical of the existence of such perpetual impediments, as is evident from the way he replies to Godfrey’s example of the log burning itself. See chapter 7, section 7.5 below.
The difference between Henry’s and Scotus’s views about *sine qua non* causes lies in their different understandings of the nature of the priority of these causes. For Henry, a *sine qua non* cause understood as a remover of an impediment is neither the efficient cause of the act nor something essentially prior to it, although it is a necessary cause in an instance of a causal interaction. The *sine qua non* causes of Henry’s type are causes that make a difference only given the particular features of a certain causal interaction: some things are *sine qua non* causes to an effect because they remove extrinsically adventitious impediments to the *per se* cause. For Scotus, the *sine qua non* cause is prior in *nature* to the effect’s essential causes, and thus it is a necessary cause in any causal interactions of a certain kind. If Scotus were to think of it in terms of a remover of an impediment, probably he would describe it as a cause that removes essential or intrinsic impediments to the *per se* cause. This difference explains why neither in the *Lectura* nor in the *Reportatio* does Scotus take Henry’s understanding of *sine qua non* causes to be useful for capturing what matters to him, namely the essential dependence of volitions on intellectual objects.

Let us return to the problem that prompted this discussion about *sine qua non* causes, namely how the will as a self-mover fits in an ordered universe. According to the view defended in the *Lectura*, the will is a partial cause of its own act in the way the intellect is also a partial cause of its own act. As we have seen, Scotus can fit a partial self-mover such as the intellect in an ordered universe: for the intellect to act, it essentially needs the causal contribution of the object. Thus, for the same reason, the will as a partial cause of the act of volition will also fit in an ordered universe. But what happens with a self-moving will that is the total cause of its act of volition? The will’s place in an ordered universe is secured through the essential ordering that exists between the intellectual object (or between the intellect informed by an act of cognition) and the will. Moreover, although the causation of the act of the will does not directly require that there be transeunt causation (for the intellect as informed by an act of cognition is not, according to [Text 5], necessarily a co-cause of the act), it indirectly presupposes such a kind of causation. For the will to have an act, the intellect must be informed by an act of cognition, but this is not possible unless there is some instance of transeunt causation in which an object acts together with the intellect to produce an act of cognition.

6.3. Self-Motion of Elements

In the previous two sections, I have presented some of Scotus’s arguments for self-agency and in general for self-motion. In this section I will discuss how Scotus replies to Aristotle’s argument that nothing can move itself *per se* and primarily. Recall that in *Physics* VII.1, Aristotle argues that any alleged
self-mover that is said to be able to move itself *per se* and primarily is affected when one of its part is at rest. As we have seen, this suggestion works only when the alleged self-movers are in fact corporeal or material self-movers. Thus, in *Physics* VII.1, Aristotle in fact argues that no corporeal mover can be a genuine self-mover. In the previous chapter, we saw that to explain how corporeal self-movers such as the elements move themselves, Henry draws upon Averroes’s understanding of non-quantitative parts: an element moves in virtue of its accidental form of heaviness or lightness and is moved in virtue of its matter (or, as Henry adds, its matter informed by a form). But despite this point, Henry refutes only a part of Aristotle’s conclusion: based on Averroes’s point, he argues against Aristotle that corporeal self-movers such as the elements are *per se* self-movers, but he agrees with Aristotle that they are not primarily self-moving. Given this, as we inquire into what Scotus says about the self-motion of elements, we need to address whether he manages to refute Aristotle’s argument and to show that elements are indeed genuine self-movers.

In contrast to Henry, Scotus offers some arguments for why the elements need to be able to move themselves. On the one hand, there are general arguments for elemental self-motion. One of these arguments appeals to perfection: if something has a passive power for receiving a certain feature, having an active power for that feature is also a perfection. If there is no other reason why such a perfection should be denied of something, then it should be maintained about that thing: elements have a passive power to receive upward or downward motion, but there is no reason to deny that they also have an active power for these kinds of motion. Another argument is one I have already mentioned: what is actually caused needs to have an actual cause. As long as the elements are moving, the efficient cause of their motion needs to be present. Since it can happen that both their generator and the removers of their impediments might be destroyed while the elements are still moving, there must be an actual efficient cause of their motion, which is the element itself. On the other hand, Scotus also gives arguments that apply specifically to the case of elemental motion. For example, a heavy thing to which a light one is attached will drag down the light one (if the heaviness exceeds the lightness). In this case, heaviness is the cause of the fall of the light thing. But whatever has the power to cause a property in a suitable passive thing will also have the power to cause that property in itself.

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51 See Scotus, *Ord. II*, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 444 (Vat. 7: 351–2): “cuicumque inest potentia passiva ad aliquid acquirendum vel habendum per motum, non est imperfectionis in eo quod habeat potentiam activam per quam possit illud acquirere, sed perfectionis. [...] patet etiam in gravibus et levibus, ubi est potentia activa ad illud ‘ubi’ cuius sunt receptiva naturaliter.”

52 See the text in note 37 in the previous chapter.
if it is of that suitable kind. The heavy thing can cause any suitable thing to move downward; thus, it can also make itself move downward, since it is itself of a suitable kind to move downward.53

How does an element move itself? Once it is generated, an element is in accidental potency to being up or down (depending on the kind of element it is); this means that it is ready to move upwards or downwards if no impediment prevents it.54 Its form of heaviness or lightness is an equivocal principle with respect to motion, for any change in place has an equivocal principle: change in place is not caused by another place, but by another kind of form, usually a quality. The form is also an active principle because the element can cause the change in place in something else of a suitable kind, as is shown by the example of a heavy thing dragging another thing. Although Scotus identifies the active principle for elemental motion as the element’s lightness or heaviness, sometimes even in the same paragraph he also speaks as if the whole element is the active principle of the motion.55 The element has not only an active principle with respect to motion, but also a passive one: it is receptive of the motion to its natural place. Thus, since heaviness or lightness can cause motion in something else of a certain suitable nature, it will also cause change in itself, if it is of the same suitable nature—and it is.

Is the element receptive of its motion to its natural place in virtue of its matter, as Averroes says? Scotus quotes approvingly a passage from Averroes that mentions this explanation, but when he himself explains the self-motion of the elements, he does not mention ‘matter’ at all.56 In my view,
Scotus departs from Averroes’s solution. The best place to see how Scotus diverge from Averroes’s explanation is in the explanation of why the motion of elements is natural to them. The upward or downward motion of an element is natural to it not because the element has an active power to cause it in itself, but because it has a “passive principle naturally inclining” it to such motion. Scotus offers a reason why this is so: the presence of a passive principle for a feature in a thing is a sufficient reason for considering that feature to be natural to that thing, while having also an active principle for that feature is usually a perfection of something, and thus more like an addition to its nature. Thus, in virtue of its nature (or form), an element has a natural inclination to being moved to its natural place, and so it must be the element’s nature (or form) that accounts for why it receives its motion.

Scotus also departs from Henry’s explanation that the element is moved in virtue of being composed of matter and form. One can think of the nature of something as being both its matter and its form; moreover, in explaining the self-motion of elements, Scotus considers the whole heavy or light thing as having an active and passive principle for upward or downward motion in virtue of its form. This might suggest that Scotus allows for matter to be that in virtue of which the element is inclined to something. But in other works, while explaining why it is not wrong to say that form is more nature than matter, Scotus remarks that a form alone can be a passive principle. In other words, he maintains that one does not need matter to explain why something has a passive principle:

[Text 6] When it is added that ‘form is more nature than matter’, it must be replied that sometimes a form is a passive principle, as happens in alterations, where the subject is not naturally inclined to that into which it is altered except insofar as it is determined by a form to that.  

Averroes’s explanation, note that the point of the quotation from Averroes is not to explain how a heavy thing moves itself, but that Aristotle can be understood as intending to say that the elements are self-movers—a view that even Averroes attributes to Aristotle.

57 Ibid., n. 466 (Vat. 7: 364): “Tamen propter verbum Philosophi addo ultra, quod motus iste non est ‘naturalis in se’ ex hoc quod habet principium activum in se, sed solum ex hoc quod mobile habet principium passivum intrinsecum, naturaliter inclinans ad motum.” See also Scotus, QSM VII, q. 12, n. 47 (OPh 4: 209).

58 Ibid., n. 48 (OPh 4: 209–10): “Impossibile est autem quod in moto ‘primum’ sit principium activum movendo. […] immo si concurrant aptitudo ista et principium activum, hoc est per accidens. Exemplum: imaginando remanere in gravi illud quo inclinatur ad esse deorsum, ablato principio effective motivo deorsum.”

59 See Scotus, Ord. II, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 466 (Vat. 7: 364): bid.: “igitur non est aliquid natura vel principium naturale aliquius nisi quia est principium passivum in moto. Hoc etiam patet quia ideo aliquid movetur naturaliter, quia movetur sicut naturum est ipsum moveri.”

60 See Scotus, QSM VII, q. 12, n. 51 (OPh 4: 211): “Cum additur quod ‘forma est magis natura quam materia’ responditur quod forma quandoque est principium passivum, sicut in alterationibus, ubi subiectum non inclinatur naturaliter ad quam alteratur nisi in quantum est per formam determinantem ipsum ad hoc.”
Thus, in alteration, something has a passive principle for receiving a quality insofar as it has a form, not insofar as it has matter. But the motion of elements is like an alteration: although the element does not undergo a change in qualities, it undergoes a change in location. Given the view expressed in [Text 6], Scotus must maintain that it is not the matter of the element plus the form that explains its inclination to its natural place, but its form alone. This being the case, and given that the element form has an active principle for its motion then, for Scotus, the form of the element has both an active and a passive principle for its motion to its natural place.

Elements are self-movers for Scotus. But are they primarily and per se self-moving? Recall that Henry argued that they are not primarily self-moving because they move in virtue of a form, that is, in virtue of something that is just an accident of them, while they are moved in virtue of their matter which is informed by a form. So, does Scotus also depart on this point from Henry? Before answering this question, let us see what Scotus says in general about the Aristotelian argument from Physics VII.1.

When Scotus discusses Aristotle’s argument that no self-mover can move itself primarily and essentially, he focuses on the meaning of ‘primarily’. The reason is clear: while it is easy to prove that a self-mover moves itself essentially, it is more difficult to show that it can move itself primarily. Scotus distinguishes two senses of primarily. One is to be found in Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics 1.4—Scotus calls it ‘the primacy of causation’; the second is taken from different passages in the Physics—Scotus calls it ‘the primacy of totality’.

According to Posterior Analytics 1.4 73b33–74a2, a feature pertains primarily to a thing when it cannot primarily pertain to any of the species of that thing or to its genus. Medieval commentators

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interpret Aristotle as saying that a feature pertains primarily to a thing when it pertains to it in virtue of what that thing is, its essence. \(^6^2\) A consequence of this interpretation is that what is primarily said of something are the proper accidents of that thing. This is so because these accidents pertain to an essence necessarily, namely in virtue of what that essence is. Probably because proper accidents are also said to be caused (in different ways) by their substance, Scotus calls the primacy from Posterior Analytics I.4 ‘primacy of causality’. Thus, for medieval commentators, this sense of ‘primacy’ can be succinctly expressed as following: whatever is said primarily about something with primacy of causality is said of a whole in virtue of its essence alone. From this, it follows that a predicate is said primarily of a whole only if it is not said primarily of anything lesser or higher than that whole.

The second sense of ‘primarily’ appears in a passage from Physics V.1, 224a21–29, where Aristotle opposes change according to part to change as a whole—thus, the name ‘primacy of totality’. This is the sense of ‘primarily’ that I have used up to this point in discussing Aristotle’s and Henry’s views. Recall that something changes according to a part when the whole thing is said to be changed, but only because a part of it is changed. For example, a human being gets healthier because her eyes get healthier. On the other hand, something changes according to the whole when the whole is said to change, and this cannot be because of anything external to it nor because of one of its parts. The two last requirements aim to rule out accidental changes and changes according to parts. Aristotle’s own example of changing as a whole is that of a thing that is moving. Scotus also refers to a second important passage that contains the same meaning of the term primarily—Physics VI.6, 236b19–23. There, Aristotle says that whatever moves primarily in a certain temporal sequence, moves in any part of that sequence. From these two texts, we get to the following understanding of *primo*: whatever is said primarily of something according to the primacy of totality is said primarily both of the whole and *all parts* of that whole. If it were not said of all parts of the whole, the feature would not be said of the whole as a whole: it would be said of the whole in virtue of a part (or some parts) of it. It is

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\(^{62}\) However, this does not mean that the property is part of the essence of that thing. See Robert Grosseteste, *In Post. An.*, 115–16: “Verbi gratia, a tota quidditate trianguli egreditur tota quidditas habitus trium angulorum equalium duobus rectis et nichil est in triangulo quod sit non causa respectu habitus trium angulorum et cetera, nee est aliquid in habitu trium angulorum et cetera quod sit non causatum respectu trianguli.” On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas commenting on Metaphysics V.30, 1025a30–34 treats “having the sum of its interior angles equal to two right angles” as a *proprium*. See Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, lib. 5, lect. 22, n. 24: “Secundo modo dicitur accidens, quod inest aliqui secundum se, et tamen non est de substantia eius. Et hic est secundus modus dicendi per se, ut supra dictum est. Nam primus erat prout secundum se dicitur de aliquo quod in eius definitione ponitur, ut animal de homem, quod nullo modo est accidens. Sed triangulo inest per se duos rectos habere, et non est de substantia eius; unde est accidens.” But we already know that *propria* are caused by the principles of a species, so in the end Aquinas must maintain the same view as Grosseteste.
important to note that given the sense of ‘primacy of totality’, predicates can be said in this manner only of wholes that are homogeneous (with respect to all their properties or features) or of wholes which, despite being heterogeneous with respect to some properties, are homogeneous with respect to the property that is said primarily of them. It is only in the case of such wholes that what applies to the whole applies to any of its part too and vice versa.\textsuperscript{63}

How are the two types of primacy, of totality and causality, related to each other? While a predicate is said of a whole with primacy of totality, it applies to that whole because it applies to all its parts, but the same predicate cannot be said at the same time with primacy of causation because such primacy posits that the predicate must pertain to the whole in virtue of itself and not in virtue of pertaining to anything lesser or higher than the whole, that is, not in virtue of pertaining to its parts. Thus, the condition of application for the primacy of causality is in opposition with the condition of application for the primacy of totality. Scotus takes this to be the point of Aristotle’s argument in \textit{Physics VII}: no whole can have the same predicate said of it with both kinds of primacy.\textsuperscript{64}

Let us now see how features such as ‘to move’ apply primarily to wholes. But first recall Aristotle’s argument from \textit{Physics VII}.1:  

\begin{enumerate}
    \item No genuine self-mover is affected when something else comes to rest.
    \item Conversion of (1): If what seems to be a self-mover stops its motion when something else comes to rest, then that self-mover is moved by something else and is only apparently a self-mover (\textit{Physics VII}.1, 241b33–242a3).
    \item (Independent premise) Anything that moves is divisible (\textit{Physics VII}.1, 241a39–40).
    \item Let \textit{AB} be a genuine self-mover, that is, something that moves itself \textit{per se} and primarily.
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{63} See Scotus, \textit{Lect. II}, d. 2, pars 2, qq. 5–6, n. 338 (Vat. 18: 202–203): “Si autem totum movet se ‘primo’ alio modo primitatis, prout dicit totalitatem, tunc totum – in quantum movens – est unigeneum et ‘moveri’ est passio unigenea; quando autem est ‘unigenea passio’ conveniens toti unigeneo (vel homogeneo), conveniet cuilibet parti, si primo convenit sibi ista primitate (sicut se habet calore respectu ignis); ergo si totum movet se primo, sequitur quod pars movetur et movet se; ergo, ex opposto, si pars non movetur, totum non movetur primo a se.” See Scotus, \textit{Ord. II}, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 477 (Vat. 7: 370): “Dico igitur tunc quod ratio Aristotelis in principio VII bene probat quod nullum corpus movetur a se primo hac duplici primitate simul: quia si movetur a se primo, id est secundum se totum, igitur motus inest cuilibet parti eius. Haec consequentia tenet per hoc quod totum in quantum movens est homogeneum, et ‘moveri’ est passio homogenea; passio autem homogenea non inest toti ‘primo’ hac primitate nisi insit cuilibet parti eius. Sequitur ergo [quod si totum movetur ‘primo’ hoc modo] quod si pars quiescit, totum quiescit.”

\textsuperscript{64} See Scotus, \textit{Lect. II}, d. 2, pars 2, qq. 5–6, n. 339 (Vat. 18: 203): “Iungatur ergo simul et sequitur quod si totum movet se primo hac duplici primitate, quod ‘moveri a se’ removetur a toto et non removetur, et sequuntur opposita. Et hoc ostendit Philosophus ibi.” See also Scotus, \textit{Ord. II}, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 477 (Vat. 7: 370): “Dico igitur tunc quod ratio Aristotelis in principio VII bene probat quod nullum corpus movetur a se primo hac duplici primitate simul.” Ibid., n. 479 (Vat. 7: 371): “Prius illatum est quod movetur primo altera primitate, igitur est impossibile totum moveri primo utraque primitate simul, quia includit contradicitionem, sicut contradicicio sequitur.”
(5) According to (3), if $AB$ were to move itself, $AB$ would need to have parts, for example, $AC$ and $CB$.

(6) If $AB$ is a genuine self-mover, then, according to (1) $AB$ should not be at rest when a part of it, say $CB$, is at rest.

(7) Let us assume that $CB$ is at rest.

(8) From (2) and (7), it follows that $AB$ is not moving as a whole—one of its parts is at rest!

(9) In fact, the only part that remains moving in $AB$ is $AC$.

(10) From (8) and (9), it follows that $AB$ is not moving per se and primarily as premise (4) claims.

(11) From (10) and (4), it also follows that $AB$ cannot be a genuine self-mover.

**Conclusion:** If $AB$ does indeed move, then $AB$ must be moved by something else (Physics VII.1, 242a13), that is, it must be moved by one of its parts.

Let us start with the case of a homogeneous whole $AB$, an element such as water or earth. If we are saying that such elements are primarily moving, then according to the primacy of totality, each part of $AB$ must move. But then Aristotle’s argument is not valid, because it will contain two contradictory premises: premise (4), which says that the whole $AB$, that is, each of its parts, must move, and premise (7), which posits that one part is at rest. Indeed, given the meaning of ‘primacy of totality’, we cannot make such an assumption. So, if ‘to move’ is understood as applying to homogeneous wholes with primacy of totality, Aristotle’s argument is not valid. But then there is no argument prohibiting homogeneous wholes (for example, elements) to move themselves primarily according to the primacy of totality.

Let us now consider the case of a heterogeneous whole, of which the feature ‘to move’ is said primarily. Since predication according to the primacy of totality requires that a predicate be said of both the whole and each part of the whole, for if the predicate ‘to move’ is to successfully apply to this heterogeneous whole, such a whole must be a homogeneous whole for this predicate. Thus, the argument will not work in the case of heterogeneous whole for the same reason it does not work in the case of homogeneous one.

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65 In the texts quoted in the previous notes, Scotus does not make this point explicitly, but he must take this to be the case, for the texts in both the *Ordinatio* and the *Lectura* end up with the concession that if the whole is said to move itself primarily, the part must also move; and if the part is said to be primarily at rest, then the whole must be primarily at rest too. For this point made explicitly see Thomas Aquinas, *In Phys.* 7, lect. 1, n. 5, in relation to Avicenna. The text is quoted in note 22 in chapter 2.

66 See Scotus, *Lect.* II, d. 2, pars 2, qqs. 5–6, n. 340 (Vat. 7: 203): “nam aliquid potest movere se una primitate (secundum primitatem totalitatis), quod est totum unigeneum, quia totum movet et totum movetur (et totum movet et totum est in potentia ad ‘ubi’ in gravibus et levibus), et quaelibet pars movet et movetur ut est in toto.”
Let us now consider the case in which ‘to move’ primarily refers to the primacy of causality. If ‘to move’ were said of a homogeneous whole $AB$ according to the primacy of causality, ‘to move’ would pertain to $AB$ in virtue of its essence, and it cannot pertain to it in virtue of any of its parts. But in a homogeneous whole $AB$, everything that applies to the whole applies to each part. Thus, ‘to move’ cannot be said primarily of $AB$. This case thus shows that homogeneous wholes cannot have predicates said of them with the primacy of causality.

While homogeneous wholes seem not to be able to have features predicated of them with the primacy of causality, heterogeneous ones can have such features. If the predicate ‘to move’ is said primarily of a heterogeneous whole $AB$, it is said in virtue of the whole $AB$’s essence. Is $AB$ still moving if one of its parts is at rest as premise (7) postulates? Yes, it is—to see this, it is enough to remember that a triangle still has the feature ‘having the sum of two right angles’, although this feature does not apply to one of its parts, for example, its angles. But note that if ‘to move’ were said of such a heterogeneous whole with both the primacy of causality and of totality, this would be impossible. Why? Recall that what allows the predicate to be said of a whole with the primacy of causality prohibits it being said with the primacy of totality—this is what Scotus thinks Aristotle’s point is in Physics VII.1 is. So, heterogeneous wholes cannot have features predicated of them with both kinds of primacy: if one predication is successful, the other will fail.

Let us return, however, to the conclusion that homogeneous whole such as the elements cannot have features predicated of them with the primacy of causality for this conclusion seems wrong. The problem is that propria are those features that are primarily predicated of things with primacy of causality for they apply in virtue of a thing’s essence. Thus, Scotus’s analysis seems to have reached the unusual conclusions that propria cannot be predicated of elements.  

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67 See Scotus, *Ord.* II, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 478 (Vat. 7: 370–71): “Accipiendo autem aliam primitatem, causalitatis praeclariae si totum movetur a se primo, ergo non removetur hoc praedicatum quod est moveri ab ipso propter quod hoc removetur ab aliquo quod non est ipsum, nec amovetur ab ipso propter hoc quod removetur ab aliquo quod est aliqvium eius; si enim triangulus habet tres angulos primo hac primitate, non solum non removetur ab eo ‘habere tres’ si removatur a quadrangulo, immo etiam non removetur ab eo propter hoc quod removetur a parte trianguli, puta ab hoc angulo vel illo. Ergo ‘moveri’ non removetur a toto cui primo inest hac primitate eti removetur a parte eius, quae pars non est ipsum; et ideo si totum movetur prima hac primitate, non quiescit ad quietem partis.”

To solve this conundrum, Scotus needs to resort to some distinctions. On the one hand, he takes into consideration the nature of the feature that is predicated of the homogeneous whole. This feature can be heterogeneous, that is, it can be a feature that applies differently to the whole and its parts. For example, ‘to move’, when applied to a subject, implies time and divisibility: some parts are moving, while others are not. So something can be said to move, even if not all its parts move. A feature can also be homogeneous, that is, it applies to all parts of the whole and the whole in the same way. For example, ‘to move’ can be taken as a homogeneous feature, but only if one understands motion in a more general way, as involving active and passive potencies of a form. On the other hand, Scotus considers the senses in which one can talk about wholes that move, namely as having quantitative parts or non-quantitative parts. Both insights can be traced to the contribution to the debate by Averroes, who suggested that for things to be said to move, it is sufficient to refer to their form and matter. We have just seen that to explain the self-motion of elements, Scotus does not refer to matter, but he refers to active and passive potencies of the elemental form, which can be considered non-quantitative parts.

Given these distinctions, Scotus argues that *propria* understood as homogeneous features fail to apply to homogeneous wholes when we assume that the parts of these wholes are quantitative:

[Text 7] Aristotle’s argument proves precisely that a whole is not moved by itself primarily, that is, that ‘to be moved’, which is a homogeneous *proprium*, does not inhere in a homogeneous whole primarily (that is, according to precise causality) insofar as that *proprium* is taken to be homogeneous (that is, of the same account [ratio]) in both the entire quantitative whole and the quantitative part. [This is so] because otherwise it would not be removed from the whole, if it were removed from the part. This is false in virtue of the primacy of totality, which is deduced here from the account of precise causality.69

[Text 7] explains why homogeneous features (*propria* included) cannot be said of a homogeneous whole primarily according to the primacy of causality:70 these features would be said with the primacy

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69 See Scotus, *Ord. II*, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 485 (Vat. 7: 373–74): “Praecise igitur probat ratio Aristotelis quod totum non movetur a se primo: hoc est quod ‘moveri’, quod est passio homogenea, non inest toti homogeneo ‘primo’ (hoc est secundum causalitatem praeclaram) in quantum illa passio accipitur ut homogenea (hoc est ut ei usucem rationis) toti quanta et parti quanti, – quia sic non removetur a toto, licet removetur a parte; quod falsum est, propter primitatem totalitatis, quae est ex ratione causalitatis praeclarae.”

70 The claim is also made in the *Lectura*. See Scotus, *Lect. II*, d. 2, pars 2, qq. 5–6 n. 342 (Vat. 18: 203–204): “Dico ergo quod nulla passio unigenea primo competet subiecto unigeneo secundum se totum, loquendo de primitate causalitatis, quia sequitur contradictio (tunc sequitur quod illa passio removetur a parte, quia quod sic primo inest alicui, removetur a quocumque quod non est ipsum, sed pars ignis non est totius ignis; si ergo totus esset primo calidus, pars ignis non esset
of totality as well. The reason is that in the case of homogeneous wholes, from the application of a predicate with the primacy of causality would follow its application with the primacy of totality. That is, if ‘to move’ were said of a homogeneous whole according to the primacy of causality, it would be said both about the whole and about its parts; that is, the whole would be of the same ‘account’ as its parts. But then, this would mean that it is also said according to the primacy of totality. Since, as we have already seen, no predicate can be said with both kinds of primacy (causality and totality), since this would lead to a contradiction, a homogeneous feature cannot be said primarily of a homogeneous whole.

Second, [Text 7] shows that homogeneous features cannot be applied to homogeneous wholes when one also assumes that the parts of the whole are quantitative parts, that is, insofar as we deal with particular homogeneous wholes such as this stone, this drop of water, etc. So it is only insofar as we think of a homogeneous whole as something having quantitative parts that it is impossible for a homogeneous predicate such as ‘to move’ to be said primarily of it according to primacy of causality. This must be so, because in homogeneous wholes the primacy of causality requires as a necessary concomitant the primacy of totality: in a homogeneous whole, the account of the whole is the same as the account of the part.

If propria and in general homogeneous features cannot be primarily predicated (with the primacy of causality) of a singular quantitative whole, what are the wholes of which they can be primarily predicated? Propria can be said of homogeneous specific wholes according to the primacy of causality. So predicates such as ‘to move’ can be said of homogeneous (specific) wholes such as the four elements.

The remarks from [Text 7] are not surprising. Indeed, as Scotus explains in QSM, it is not customary to attribute propria primarily to singular subjects because the primary subjects of propria are the species. Thus, homogeneous features cannot be primarily applied to singular subjects, that is, to material wholes such as this piece of earth or this drop of water. Moreover, it is not surprising that

71 See Scotus, Ord. II, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 482 (Vat. 7: 372): “Non igitur hoc totum homogeneum grave movetur a se primo, ita quod ‘moveri’, ut est commune sibi et partii eius cuilibet, insit sibi primo secundum hanc primitatem, quia tunc non removeretur a toto etsi removeretur a parte; hoc autem est falsum propter aliam primitatem necessario concurrentem cum ista, si ista ponitur in subiecto homogeneo respectu passionis homogeneae.”
72 For the same explanation, see King, “Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change,” 270.
homogeneous features are predicated primarily of specific homogeneous wholes, since it is in virtue of the fact that these homogeneous predicates belong to a homogeneous (specific) whole that they also belong to any instance of that species in virtue of belonging to the species. For example, Socrates and Plato have the feature of being able to laugh not in virtue of being *individual* human beings, but in virtue of being human beings. On the other hand, note that a (species of) self-mover AB will never lose its feature of being a self-mover if that feature is removed from one of its concrete parts, because it applies to the species in virtue of its essence. For example, human beings as a species do not stop being capable of laughing if Socrates is no longer capable of laughing.

Applying these insights to the elements, it follows that, in the case of the elements, a *proprium* such as ‘to move itself’ is said primarily of the species, in virtue of the form of these elements; because it is said primarily of the species, it will be said non-primarily about the individuals under the species. But Aristotle’s argument does not prove anything about this case: indeed, an element can stop moving, but from this it does not follow that the species of that element is not moving. In the end, Scotus’s point is that there is only one case in which the argument from *Physics VII.1* works, namely when AB is taken as a quantitative homogeneous whole, and ‘primarily’ is understood either as the primacy of causality alone or as both the primacy of totality and the primacy of causality.

Scotus’s solution seems not to show how a quantitative whole can be said to be primarily self-moving according to the primacy of causality. On the one hand, [Text 7] says that homogeneous

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73 See Scotus, *QSM IX*, q. 14, n. 75 (OPh 4: 655): “Quid ergo est calidum primo vel calefacit primo, sicut ‘primo’ notat inhaerentiam propriae passionis ad subiectum? Responsio: nullius propriae passionis consuevit hactenus assignari primum subiectum aliquod singulare, sed universale, quod abstrahit ab omni quanto, et aequaliter salvatur in hoc toto quanto homogeneo et in eius parte. Et verum est quod ab illo universali numquam removetur, si aliquid non sit calidum, de quo illud universale non praedicatur alia circumstantia.”

74 Ibid., n. 74 (OPh 4: 655–56): “Et de solo tali toto quantitativo probat Aristoteles quod non potest moveri a se primo, prout ‘primo’ accipitur quando propria passio dicitur primo inesse proprio subiecto. […] Nam si ignis est causa effectua proprii caloris licet ille totus se totum faciat calidum, et ita idem primo mutat uel mouet se uel agit in se, accipiendo ‘primo’ sicut accipitur in V Physicorum, non tamen ille ignis primo facit se calidum, accipiendo ‘primo’ secundum ab aliam significationem, quid mirum? Quia undecumque fiat, nec ‘ille ignis particularis quantus’ est sic primo calidus. Sequitur enim contradictio, quod scilicet ‘non erit calidus si pars eius sit non calida’, et quod ‘est calidus si pars eius sit non calida’. Primum sequitur ex primitate secundo modo; secundum ex primitate primo modo.” My interpretation differs from that of Peter King, who argues that there is a necessary connection between the two primacies (the Connection Theorem) for both heterogeneous and homogeneous wholes. (See Peter King, “Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change,” 269) Using the Connection Theorem, King constructs a revised version of Aristotle’s argument and concludes that, thus revised, the argument does not say anything about homogeneous wholes. In his view, the argument applies only to certain cases in which heterogeneous and homogeneous wholes are involved. (See King, “Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change,” 269–73.) But this cannot be what Scotus maintains, for he says clearly that the argument of Aristotle applies to homogeneous wholes with homogeneous predicates said of them according to the primacy of causality or with both kinds of primacy at the same time and in the same way.
features are said primarily of homogeneous specific wholes according to the primacy of causality. For example, ‘to move’ is said of earth as a species in virtue of earth’s essence. On the other hand, [Text 7] says that no homogeneous feature is said primarily of a quantitative homogeneous whole according to the primacy of causality. For example, ‘to be moved’ cannot be said primarily of this piece of earth according to the primacy of causality, that is, in virtue of this piece of earth essence—it is said of it non-primarily only because it is an instance of the species earth. But for physics, what matters is what happens in the case of these quantitative homogeneous wholes.

Scotus argues that when understood heterogeneously, predicate such as ‘to move’ or ‘to be moved’ can be said primarily even of a particular element (an instance of a specific whole). In the Ordinatio, he says that ‘to be moved’ can be primarily (according to the primacy of causality) said of (1) a homogeneous whole in general (that is, about a homogeneous whole as it is a species), of (2) a particular homogeneous whole (that is, an instance of this species), and of (3) a part of such a particular homogeneous whole (a drop of water, for example). But, as Peter King has pointed out, the important point is that while ‘to be moved’ is said of a homogeneous whole in general, the predicate is homogeneous, and when it is said of a particular homogeneous whole, the predicate is heterogeneous. 75 This allows Scotus to explain how a particular element can be primarily moving and moved: the predicate ‘to move’ is such that when it applies to a particular homogeneous whole, it does not need to apply to each part of the whole, although it applies to the whole—after all, it is a heterogeneous predicate. Indeed, the predicate ‘to move’ applies to the whole heavy thing (for example), but it does not need to apply to each of its parts: a self-mover has a part that moves and one that is moved. The reason why such heterogeneous predicates can apply to the particular homogeneous whole is precisely because they apply to the specific homogeneous whole. 76

In conclusion, according to Scotus, Aristotle’s argument from Physics VII.1 works only when AB is a particular homogeneous whole and what is predicated of it is said of it either with the primacy of causality or with both the primacy of causality and of totality at the same time. But this conclusion allows for (1) homogeneous predicates (such as ‘to be moved’) to be said of particular wholes.

75 Ibid., 274.
76 See Scotus, Ord. II, d. 2, pars 2, q. 6, n. 484 (Vat. 7: 373): “Et tunc nego hanc propositionem assumptam ‘quod convenit aliqui primo (id est secundum causalitatem praecisam) non removetur ab eo’, – quia aliiquid quod non est ipsum praedicatum, removetur ab aliquo quod non est ipsum subjectum. Haeque enim propositio falsa est universaliiter, ubi subjectum habet subjectum prius et passio passionem priorem, tune enim ad remotionem prioris passionis de priore subjecto, sequitur passionem posteriorem removeri a posteriore subjecto.”
(instances of elements) according to the primacy of totality; (2) homogeneous predicates (such as ‘to be moved’) to be said of homogeneous wholes in general (the species of elements) according to the primacy of causality; and (3) heterogeneous predicates (such as ‘to be moved’) to be said of particular homogeneous wholes (instances of elements) according to the primacy of causality. Since the scope of the argument from *Physics* VII.1 is, as Scotus remarks, limited, elements can be said to move themselves primarily.

### 6.4. Conclusion

This chapter and the previous one aimed to clarify two issues: whether Henry and Scotus allow for genuine self-movers (and self-agents) and whether they allow for material self-movers. The reason we are interested in these issues is that in *Physics* VII.1 Aristotle tries to cast doubt on the existence of genuine self-motion. In the previous chapter, we saw that Henry allows for the existence of certain genuine self-movers (God and the will), but he denies that there are genuine material self-movers. In this chapter, we have seen that Scotus has a general argument for why self-motion (and self-agency) is in principle not problematic. He also explains how the elements, the beings that Henry considers to be the closest to genuine self-movers but still to fall short, are in fact genuine self-movers.

The discussion of Henry’s and Scotus’s view about the possibility of genuine self-change in material and immaterial beings has revealed that there are important differences between these two authors. At the beginning of this chapter, I pointed out that the differences between Henry’s and Scotus’s view about self-motion and self-agency are related to their different views about causal powers and their causal contribution. This chapter has confirmed the point in the case of the elements. While Henry thinks that elements move in virtue of their form and are moved in virtue of their matter and form, Scotus argues that it is the form of the element alone that has both an active and passive principle for moving itself. Scotus’s proposal evades a problem that Henry faces: while the whole element moves itself and is moved, it moves only in virtue of a part of it, and since this form (heaviness or lightness) is only an accident of the element, the elements are not primarily self-moving. However, Scotus faces a problem of his own making: if it is the form itself that has the active and passive

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77 See Scotus, *QSM* IX, q. 14, n. 74 (OPh 4: 654): “Quam ergo vanum est Aristotelem hic adducere ad conclusionem hanc generaliter probandum quod nihil movet se, cum in simplicibus motis nihil valeat, sicut in potentissim animae, cum etiam in quibuscumque quantis nihil faciat contra hoc quod aliquid ponit! Nam si ignis est causa effectuia proprie caloris licet ille totus se totum faciat calidum, et ita idem primo mutat uel mouet se uel agit in se, accipiendo ‘primo’ sicut accipitur in V Physicorum, non tamen ille ignis primo facit se calidum, accipiendo ‘primo’ secundum aliam significationem, quid mirum?”
principles for self-moving, how can one attribute self-motion to the element itself, that is to the composite of matter and form? Scotus does not address this problem in his discussion of the elements. We get an answer when he replies to the Aristotelian argument that nothing can be acting and suffering at the same time—an issue that I will discuss in the final chapter.

Henry’s and Scotus’s disagreement about aspects pertaining to the problem of the possibility of self-motion and self-agency has other causes than these authors’ understanding of the nature of causal powers and their causal contribution. For example, the discussion about the role of the intellectual object in the causation of the act of the will highlighted how Scotus’s views on how the universe is ordered and how his views about mental content shape his views on self-motion. This is to be expected since the possibility of self-motion is an issue that is at the centre of many debates in natural philosophy, psychology and metaphysics.
Chapter 7 Henry and Scotus on Self-Motion, Act, and Potency

Let us pause and take stock. The issue that this dissertation aims to address is how Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus argue for the possibility of self-agency and self-motion. But to understand their views, we had to discuss first (in chapter 3 and 4) what these two authors say about the nature of causal powers and their causal contribution, for self-agents and self-movers are things endowed with causal powers to cause their own features. Once these issues were addressed, in chapters 5 and 6 I discussed how Henry and Scotus respond to Aristotle's argument in Physics VII.1 that there is nothing like a genuine self-mover, that is, there is no such thing that can move itself essentially and primarily. Thus far, we know that Henry and Scotus agree that genuine self-motion and self-agency are possible and that they disagree about whether material beings are genuine self-movers. In short, we know that Henry and Scotus maintain what many medieval philosophers, following Aristotle, considered impossible, namely that things can give themselves features that they do not have or that things can move and be moved at the same time. In this chapter and the next, I will discuss how Henry and Scotus reply to the most important arguments against the possibility of self-motion. In a certain sense, the most difficult part of the discussion about the possibility of self-motion begins just now.

For something to be a self-mover, it needs to be able to undergo a change in its features and to be itself the source of this change. Prima facie, this does not seem problematic; however, when this view is analyzed in the context of Aristotle’s account of change, it does become problematic. According to Aristotle, any change involves a passing from potentiality to actuality, which are contrary states. The possibility of a self-mover raises two issues. First, since actuality and potentiality are opposite, a self-mover, in changing itself, must be at the same time in both, which entails that contraries will be true at the same time of the same thing. Second, there is the problem of how a self-mover can pass by itself from one contrary to the other. How can something that is potentially \( x \) make itself actually \( x \)? If it is does not yet have \( x \), then it cannot give itself something that it does not already have; but if it already is actually \( x \), it is not potentially \( x \). These two issues are at the core of the Aristotelian argument that nothing can move itself because nothing can be in act and potency at the same time, probably the most well-known argument against the possibility of self-motion. Why is this the most well-known argument against self-motion? On the one hand, the argument relies on plausible claims: something that does not already have a feature cannot give itself this feature; but nothing can be at the same time in contrary states. On the other hand, this argument cuts deeper than any argument against self-motion. For example, in contrast to the argument from Physics VII.1, this argument applies
not only to material but also to immaterial beings. Moreover, it raises issues that pertain to metaphysics: what is it to be potential or actual?

In this chapter, I will explain Henry’s and Scotus’s response to this argument. I will show that Scotus replies to the argument differently than Henry does, and I will offer two reasons why he could not be satisfied with Henry’s reply. In discussing these issues, I will also tackle a question that seems to pertain more to general metaphysics than to the metaphysics of self-motion, namely that of the relation between ‘potency’ as power or principle and ‘potency’ as potentiality or division of being. The chapter will have two main parts, the first dealing with the reply to Aristotle’s argument by Henry, the second with Scotus’s reply.

### 7.1. Henry’s Reply to Aristotle

Henry takes Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VIII.5 that nothing can be a self-mover for nothing can be in act and in potency at the same time to be inconclusive. Recall that Aristotle’s argument rests on several premises. First, Aristotle claims that for something to cause a feature either in itself or in something else, that thing needs to have an instance of that feature: hot things heat other things because they are hot. Second, he also claims that for something to be able to receive a certain feature, that thing must lack the feature to be received. Given these two premises, it is hard to see how a self-mover can cause something in itself. How does Henry reply to this argument? He brings up the traditionally raised objection that Aristotle’s argument only shows that no self-mover can cause its own features through univocal causation because that would indeed require a self-mover to have and not to have the same feature at the same time. However, if the self-mover caused some of its features through equivocal causation, then the self-mover would not be said to both lack and possess the same feature. At the core of Henry’s solution is a distinction between virtually and formally possessing a feature.

In this section, first I will focus on Henry’s solution. Then I will discuss a problem related to how to understand his solution, a problem that will be relevant for understanding the differences between Henry’s and Scotus’s replies to Aristotle. Third, I will discuss how Henry can reply to some objections that can be raised against his solution.
7.1.1. Henry’s Achilles Argument

Let us start with a text in which Henry briefly lays out his solution to the Aristotelian argument:

[Text 1] It must be said that the question proposed [namely, whether a substance can immediately cause its accidents] concerns in general the efficient cause of accidents, but specifically [it is proposed] because of that accident which is the act of volition: in what way, can it be efficiently caused by the will which is its subject? And the reason for doubt in this [question] is that since the subject is the material cause with respect to its accidents and thus, although it is in actuality as regards [its] substantial form, nevertheless, as it is from itself, it is only in potency to the accidental form. And so, to be reduced from potency to act, it necessarily needs something that exists actually in the way that it itself is [only] in potency. But I respond that, [it needs] something that exists in act, but only virtually, not formally, in the same way the sun, which is warm in potency, can virtually make something warm, although it is not itself formally warm.¹

In [Text 1], Henry gives a reason why self-motion (or more generally any case in which something causes a feature in itself) is problematic. This reason is that any such self-acting thing must be at the same time both in act with respect to a form and in potency with respect to the same form. If a thing is in potency for φ, or lacks φ, it will acquire φ from an agent that already has φ, but in self-motion the thing should acquire φ from itself; thus a self-mover must give itself φ although it lacks it. This is impossible: for nothing can give something that it does not have. This is the point of Aristotle’s second argument from Physics VIII.5 against self-motion.

Henry further notices that there is a solution to this argument: a thing that lacks φ does not need to acquire φ from something that possesses φ, that is, from a thing that is formally φ. In fact, a thing can acquire φ from something that possesses φ virtually, that is, from a thing that can cause φ without being formally φ. Indeed, there are two grounds in virtue of which an agent can cause something. On the one hand, an agent can cause a feature φ because it formally possesses φ, that is it has an actual instance of φ—such an agent is a univocal agent. It is on univocal causation that Aristotle

¹ See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. X, q. 9 (Leuven 14: 221): “Dicendum quod quaestio ista proposita est de causa efficiente accidentis generaliter, sed specialiter propter accidentem quod est ipse actus volendi: quomodo possit causari effective ab ipsa voluntate quae est subiectum eius. Et est ratio dubitationis in ea, cum subiectum sit causa materialis respectu accidentis sui, et ita, licet sit in actu quantum ad formam substantialem, tamen quantum est ex se, non est nisi in potentia ad formam accidentalem, et ideo necessario eget aliquo existente in actu tale quale est illud in potentia, quo reducatur de potentia in actum. Dico autem, existente in actu tale, saltem virtute, etsi non in forma, quemadmodum sol qui, calidus in potentia, facit calidum in actu virtute, etsi non formaliter calidus est.”
builds his argument in *Physics* VIII.5 against self-motion. On the other hand, an agent can cause $\varphi$ because it virtually possesses $\varphi$, that is, it has the necessary causal powers to bring about $\varphi$—such an agent is an equivocal agent. It is on equivocal causation that Henry builds his argument for the possibility of self-motion. He proposes that in self-motion, an agent can bring about in itself a feature $\varphi$ not because it already has this feature, but because it has the right ability or power to bring it about. It is important to keep in mind that this power to bring about $\varphi$ is rooted in having either a certain nature or a certain other feature, but not in having $\varphi$.

Two general observations need to be made before entering into a more detailed discussion of the argument. First, Henry is not the first to appeal to something virtually (\textit{virtualiter}) containing a feature $\varphi$ as a response to the problem of self-motion; in fact, it can be already found in Walter of Bruges.\(^2\) Besides Walter of Bruges, there is another author that mentions virtual containment in relation to self-motion. In his *Quaestiones naturales*, a text stemming from Paris around 1272–1274, Siger of Brabant discusses the distinction between virtually and formally containing a feature as a solution for the possibility of self-motion, but he rejects it.\(^3\) The fact that before Henry the distinction between

\(^2\) Two important concepts that Henry uses in his solution to the Aristotelian argument can already be found in Walter of Bruges’s work. First, Walter talks about self-motion using the Neoplatonic terms \textit{reflexio ex conversio sui super se}, something that Henry also does for example in *Quodl.* X, q. 9, 233. Second, Walter also solves the problem of self-motion by appeal to virtual containment; the only difference is that instead of using \textit{virtualiter}, he uses the term \textit{effective}. For example, to explain self-motion, he uses counterfactually the example of the sun, which can heat and heats something effectively without being itself formally hot. See Walter of Bruges, *Quaestiones disputatae*, q. 4, ad. 5 in Walter of Bruges, *Quaestiones disputatae du b. Gauthier de Bruges: Texte inédit*, ed. Ephrem Longpré, Les Philosophes Belges 10 (Louvain: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de l’Université, 1928), 42: \(\text{\"{}Ad quinquent dicit quod major est falsa nisi addatur \textit{et eodem modo}; et tune non habet locum in proposito, quia una et eadem respectu ejsdem est in actu et in potentia et movens et motum, sed non eodem modo. Est enim innata quadam potestate per conversionem sui super se movens se in quantum est in potentia et quasi mobile respectu potestatis vel potestativi actus qui est conversio sui super se. Exemplum esset in sole, qui est calidus effective vel potestativa; si esse calidus posset formaliter, radius emissus potestativa, si refleteretur super se, faceret s\textit{e}}\) formaliter.\(\) For more on Walter’s view, see also Stadter, *Psychologie und Metaphysik der menschlichen Freiheit*, 74–76. For effective and \textit{virtualiter} meaning the same thing see Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VI, q. 6 (PhB 3: 142): \(\text{\"{}Verbi gratia, cibus dicitur sanus ex ordine ad sanitatem quae est in animali, et ibi sititur et completur illa habitudo, et ideo dicitur animal sanum simpliciter et formaliter, cibus autem virtualiter sine effective.\text{\"{}}}\) For the relation between Henry of Ghent and Walter of Bruges, see Decorte, \(\text{\"{}Der Einfluss der Willenspsychologie des Walter von Bruegg OFM auf die Willenspsychologie und Freiheitslehre des Heinrich von G\text{\"{}}ht\text{\"{}}\)\), 215–40. As I will point out below, there are some important mistakes in Decorte’s interpretation of Henry, and I suspect that some of these mistakes affect his understanding of how close Henry’s and Walter’s views are. In my opinion, what Decorte sees as differences between Walter’s and Henry’s view are in fact similarities.

\(^3\) See Siger of Brabant, *Quaestiones naturales* (Paris), q. 2 in Siger de Brabant, *Écrits de logique, de morale et de physique*, ed. B. Bazan (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1974), 122: \(\text{\"{}Ad secundum dicendum quod idem potest esse virtualiter tale licet formaliter careat illo. Tamen quod est virtualiter tale, qua altiore modo habet illud, per se loquendo numquam est receptivum illius. Ideo sol, in cuius virtute haec inferiora calefunt, calefienti non valet; et agens intellectus, in cuius virtute intellectus possibilis infinatur speciebus, nullam speciem recipit. Propert quod cessat obiectio.\text{\"{}}}\) On the date of the text see Ibid., 29 and 39.
being virtually and formally \( \varphi \) is already used as a solution to the self-motion problem is not surprising, for this distinction is just a refinement of the old objection to Aristotle’s second argument from *Physics* VIII.5. Second, it is also important to note that certain medieval philosophers identified the solution by appeal to virtual containment as the most powerful argument for the possibility of self-motion. For example, Henry of Lübeck says about it that it is the “Achilles” concerning the problem of self-motion.⁴

Let us return to the argument from [Text 1], which I will call Henry’s Achilles argument. The argument has the following structure:

1. A thing moves itself with respect to a feature \( \varphi \), when it passes from being \( \varphi \) in potency to being \( \varphi \) in act.

2. It is impossible for a thing to be in potency \( \varphi \) when that thing is \( \varphi \) in act, that is, it is informed by a feature \( \varphi \) (or formally possesses \( \varphi \)).

3. It is possible that A is in act because it possesses a power for causing \( \varphi \) while it is not informed by \( \varphi \). (This means that A is or has virtually \( \varphi \)).

4. Given 2 and 3, it is possible that A, while lacking \( \varphi \) or being \( \varphi \) in potency, nevertheless has the power to cause \( \varphi \).

**Conclusion:** It is possible for A to bring itself from being \( \varphi \) in potency to being formally \( \varphi \) in virtue of the power to cause \( \varphi \); that is, it is possible for A to move itself.

Since several of the premises of this argument are not clearly stated in [Text 1], in what follows I will present some textual evidence for them.

Premises (2) and (3) are endorsed by Henry in *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2:

[Text 2] I say that indeed potency is contrary to act, not to every act, but to that act which is the complement of that potency. For this act, while the thing is in potency, does not exist; and conversely, while the thing is not in potency, the act exists. And these are the act and potency

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that divide being and it is impossible for one and the same thing as it is in potency to a certain act to bring itself to that act.⁵

In [Text 2], Henry distinguishes between two ways of being in act. One kind of act is opposed to potency because it is a complement of it. At this point, Henry refers to act and potency as divisions of being; a being is either in act or in potency. Consider a hot pot. This pot is in act hot because it is informed by the form of heat. Being informed by heat, the pot is now able to cause heat in something else. This kind of being φ in act is obviously opposed to being φ in potency. When something is φ in potency, it is such that it can be informed by φ, but it lacks φ. Thus, when a thing is hot in act because it is informed by heat, it cannot be hot in potency, that is, it cannot lack heat. In this sense, being φ in act and in potency complement each other: when something is φ in act, it is not at the same moment φ in potency; when it is φ in potency, it is not φ in act. So, in premise (2), act and potency refer to act and potency as divisions of being: being actual φ and being potentially or possibly φ.

There is, however, another way of being in act, which is hinted at in [Text 2], for Henry says that it is not always the case that potency and act are opposed. This way of being in act that applies to things that are actual with respect to a feature φ not by being informed by φ but in another way, namely by being virtually φ. To be virtually φ means that a thing, while it is not informed by φ, nevertheless has the power to bring about φ. Consider a 3D printer. Such a printer has the power to make many things without being any of these. Or consider an acidic solution being splashed on a piece of blue litmus paper. The solution can turn the litmus paper red, even though it is not itself red. So, things can be said to be actual with respect to a feature because it can cause this feature in something else, despite not being informed by that feature. This is what premise (3) claims.

The idea that this second kind of actuality is not opposed to potency appears more clearly in the following text:

[Text 3] The same one thing that is in potency to an act, for example the will [that is in potency] to the act of volition, if at the very same moment at which it is in potency to that act according to one of its aspects, could be in act according to another of its aspects, in virtue of which [latter aspect] the act is naturally able to be produced from the will [insofar as it is passive] according to the [former] aspect. [If this is so] it is not impossible that the same one thing as

⁵ See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 559vB): “Dico revera potentia est contraria actui non cuicumque sed illi que est complementum ipsius potentiae. Iste enim actus cum res est in potentia non est, et econverso cum ipsa est in potentia actus non est. Et isti sunt actus et potentia qui dividunt ens et impossibile est quod aliquid idem re ut est in potentia ad talem actum deducat se ad illum.”
it is in act according to one of its aspects \([\text{ratio}]\) brings itself, insofar as it is in potency according to another aspect, from potency to act. \(^6\)

The reason why being \(\varphi\) in potency is not opposed to being virtually \(\varphi\)—the claim made by premise (4)—is that it is possible for a thing to be virtually \(\varphi\) according to one of its aspects (that is, able in virtue of one of its aspects to cause a feature \(\varphi\)), and at the same time to be \(\varphi\) in potency according to another of its aspects (that is, lacking \(\varphi\) but able to receive it in itself). What we compare in this case are not act and potency as divisions of being, but something having an active power for causing a feature \(\varphi\) with something being \(\varphi\) in potency.

Henry spends quite some time explaining why being informed by \(\varphi\) (or formally \(\varphi\)) is different in account from being virtually \(\varphi\). He is interested in this claim because of an objection by Godfrey of Fontaines. Godfrey argues that being formally \(\varphi\) and being virtually \(\varphi\) cannot be different in account. While he agrees that some things are only virtually \(\varphi\), without being formally \(\varphi\)—for example, the sun with respect to heat—he also adds that nothing can be formally \(\varphi\) without also being virtually \(\varphi\)—for example, a thing that is formally hot must also be virtually hot, that is able to cause heat in something else. \(^7\) So Godfrey points out that while being virtually \(\varphi\) does not always imply being formally \(\varphi\), being formally \(\varphi\) always implies that something is also virtually \(\varphi\). From this, it follows that a thing that can be formally \(\varphi\) cannot be first virtually \(\varphi\), for that would mean that the thing is virtually \(\varphi\) in two ways: in one way, it would be virtually \(\varphi\) before being formally \(\varphi\), and then it would be virtually \(\varphi\) in another way once it becomes formally \(\varphi\).

Henry tries to address this objection in the following text:

\[\text{Text 4}\] To have a determinate power and to be such by action or formally are always diverse and of a different account \([\text{alterius rationis}]\); however, to be such by action and to be such

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\(^6\) Ibid.: “Idem tamen re quod est in potentia ad talem actum, puta voluntas ad actum volitionis, si simul cum hoc quod est in potentia ad actum illum secundum unam rationem eius possit esse in actu sub isto secundum aliam eius rationem secundum quam natus est iste actus produci ab codem secundum aliam rationem, nullum est inconveniens quod idem ut est in actu secundum unam eius rationem, seipsum ut est in potentia ad illum secundum aliam rationem deducat de potentia ad actum.”

\(^7\) See Godfrey of Fontaines, \textit{Quodl. VII}, q. 6 (PhB 3: 342): “Sed omne illud quod est formaliter tale quale facit aliquid, cum hoc etiam est virtute tale in quantum scilicet habet efficaciam ut tale faciat aliquid quale ipsum est in actu, sed cum hoc fit secundum eandem rationem univocam, ideo etiam dictur agens univocum. Hoc ergo videtur universaliiter verum de quolibet activo respectu passivi et e converso […] sicut calidum formaliter, quod simul etiam est calidum virtualiter.” This is the beginning of a larger argument against Henry’s view. However, since I argue that this reasoning is incorrect, I think that the whole argument which starts from this reasoning loses its force against Henry. For the whole argument see ibid., 342–43.
formally cannot be many at once in the same thing because they are of the same account [\textit{unius rationis}] as many whitenings [are of the same account].

Consider a virtually hot thing that can make itself hot. Henry’s point in [Text 4] is that being virtually hot is not the same in account as being formally hot, nor as making itself hot. That is, being virtually hot is a state of an entire different kind from these two other states. How does Henry get to this point? First, he claims that making itself hot (what Henry calls in [Text 4] to be hot by an action) and being formally hot are of the same account: what it is for the thing to be formally hot is precisely for it to make itself hot. This is so because the self-mover has an action of making itself hot precisely at the moment at which heat is caused in itself; that is, at the moment the thing is formally hot. Given this, and given also that in a thing at any given time there can be only one instance of a feature, it follows that once a thing is formally hot it cannot cause in itself another form of heat; this is why a univocal agent cannot move itself, and also why there cannot be many instances of something making itself hot and being formally hot.

Second, against Godfrey, Henry claims that virtually \(\varphi\) and formally \(\varphi\) are not of the same account—or as he puts it in another passage (contained in [Text 5] below), they are of different kinds. This further means that virtually and formally \(\varphi\) do not contradict each other—contradictory items must be of the same kind. But why are \textit{virtualiter} and \textit{formaliter} \(\varphi\) distinct? Consider again a virtually

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8 See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 454vL): “quia esse virtute particulari et esse tale actione sive formaliter sunt in eodem aliiud et aliiud et alterius rationis; esse autem actione et formaliter non possunt esse pluralia simul in eodem eo quod sunt unius rationis ut plures albationes.”

9 For more on what an action is for Henry, see the next chapter, section 8.2.2.1.

10 In \textit{Quodl.} XV, q. 6, Henry explains that in the same substance there cannot be multiple accidents that are distinct only numerically, because accidents are individuated by their subjects, in fact by the passive potencies in their subjects. For example, a passive potency for whiteness in a table is related to whiteness. This means that any numerically distinct whiteness can complete this potency and once it is completed there is no potency for another whiteness. See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} XV, q. 6 (Leuven 20: 31–32): “Ex unica autem et eadem potentia passiva in eodem secundum numerum non potest produci aut esse simul et eodem tempore plus quam unica forma secundum numerum, quia potentia terminatur per quemcumque actum unum ad quem est. Iciro igitur mihi videtur quod plures tales formae differentes numero non possunt simul esse in eodem subjecto. Concedo igitur ultimam rationem.” For the last argument, see ibid., 31: “In contrarium est quia accidentis non numeratur nisi per subjectum; quasi subjecto existente uno et eodem et accidents eiusdem speciei non numeratur, sed est idem secundum numerum.”

11 Based on [Text 4], Jos Decorte argued that for Henry to be virtually \(\varphi\) and to be formally \(\varphi\) can never coexist in the same thing. (See Decorte, “Der Einfluss der Willenspsychologie des Walter von Bruegge OFM auf die Willenspsychologie und Freiheitslehre des Heinrich von Ghent,” 232.) But this reading of [Text 4] cannot be Henry’s view for two reasons. First, there is nothing in [Text 4] that warrants Decorte to infer this view, for the text does not show that they cannot coexist, but that they are specifically distinct. Second, [Text 4] shows conclusively that being virtually \(\varphi\) can coexist with being formally \(\varphi\), but also with being potentially \(\varphi\). Surprisingly, Decorte mentions this text, but he again misinterprets it. He interprets [Text 4] in the following way: “Der Akt (a) stellt sich sowohl dem Willen in Potenz (A) wie auch dem Willen als aktualisierter Virtualität (A’) gegenüber.” (Ibid., 236.) But Henry says the opposite, namely that “actus autem quo
hot thing that can be a self-mover. Such a thing is first virtually hot, but then when it moves itself it makes itself hot, and so it is also formally hot. While according to [Text 4], making itself hot and being formally hot are of the same account, being virtually hot is not the same as making itself hot, nor is it the same as being formally hot, for not only does it precede them but it can also exist without them—it is possible that our self-mover never moves itself because it is impeded. Thus, there does not seem to be any connection between being virtually hot and being formally hot. So, against Godfrey, Henry would insist that being virtually $\varphi$ does not refer simply to an ability to bring about $\varphi$; rather, it refers to this ability as it is grounded in a certain state in which a thing possesses not $\varphi$, but another feature (in fact, a thing that possesses a feature virtually and formally is an equivocal agent). Thus, being virtually $\varphi$ and making itself or something else $\varphi$ are different states, grounded in different features, which Godfrey’s argument does not show to be opposed or contraries.\footnote{For how Godfrey could resist Henry’s suggestion see below section 7.1.3.}

The following text nicely summarizes the relations between being virtually $\varphi$, being formally $\varphi$, and being $\varphi$ in potency:

[Text 5] A volition is the act which is the complement of that potency [to the act] and is contrary to it, and they cannot [both] be at the same time. But the act by which the will is virtually this [i.e. volition] is contrary neither to the volition nor to the potency for it, but exists at the same time as both, since it is of a different kind. And since it is with respect to an act of volition that the will brings itself from potency to act, [this act] is the action of an equivocal agent, as the sun generates man and heat.\footnote{See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 559vB): “Sic dico in proposito quod voluntas ratione suae libertatis est virtute tale quid quae est volitio, forma scilicet sua quae ipsa est. Propter quod ipsa voluntas, quia virtute talis est quals est ipsa secundum formam, quando est informata forma volitionis, sive quae est volitio ipsa, se ipsam, ut est in potentia ad formam volitionis, potest deducere de potentia ad actum. Et est volitio actui qui est complementum illius potentiae, et isti potentiae contraria, nec possunt esse simul. Actus autem quo voluntas est virtute tale nec volitioni, nec potentiae ad illam contrariatur, sed est simul cum ambothus, quia est alterius generis. Et cum voluntas secundum actum volitionis se ipsam facit de potentia in actum, est actio agentis aequipvoci, sicut cum sol generat hominem aut calorem.”}

On the one hand, being formally $\varphi$ and being $\varphi$ in potency are opposite—the will informed by an act of volition and the potency for this act are complementary. On the other hand, because being virtually $\varphi$ is of a different kind than being formally $\varphi$ and being $\varphi$ in potency, being virtually $\varphi$ is neither the opposite of being formally $\varphi$ nor that of being $\varphi$ in potency. Moreover, Henry says that because they are of different kinds, being virtually $\varphi$ can exist at the same time with both being $\varphi$ in potency and
being formally \( \varphi \). [Text 5] also contains two other important points. First, it states that being \textit{virtually} \( \varphi \) is a form of actuality. Second, it claims that when an agent that is virtually \( \varphi \) acts, it acts equivocally: a self-mover virtually contains \( \varphi \) so that it has the power to cause \( \varphi \) without already being formally \( \varphi \). Thus, the form that the agent has when it acts is not the same as the form that it causes—and this is an essential feature of equivocal causation.

7.1.2. Potency and Power

Henry’s main claim in [Text 1] is that having a power for \( \varphi \) (being virtually \( \varphi \)) is of a different kind than both being formally \( \varphi \) and being \( \varphi \) in potency. Although he insists on the differences between being virtually \( \varphi \) and formally \( \varphi \), he seems less concerned with explaining how being \( \varphi \) in potency is distinct from being virtually \( \varphi \), and more importantly, what being \( \varphi \) in potency means. In the previous section, to be \( \varphi \) in potency was explained as lacking \( \varphi \) but being able to receive \( \varphi \). In this section, I will inquire more into the nature of being \( \varphi \) in potency. The question in which I am interested is whether by a self-mover being \( \varphi \) in potency, Henry refers to the passive \textit{power} of the self-mover for \( \varphi \) or to the \textit{possibility} of the self-mover being perfected by \( \varphi \). In answering this question, I hope that it will become clear how Henry envisages the relation between power and possibility or potentiality. However, two words of caution. First, given the topic of this thesis, my discussion of the relation between power and potentiality is restricted to the relation between power and natural possibility, that is, possibility related to natural change. Thus, I will leave aside what Henry might have to say about the possibility or impossibility of things to be created. Second, the full payoff of this discussion about power and potentiality will be obvious only when I discuss further on Scotus’s view about being \( \varphi \) in potency.

\textit{Potentia} refers to different concepts. In the previous chapters, I used \textit{potentia} mainly in the sense of power or principle, that is, something that has a causal contribution (Scotus’s view of potency as principle) or something that merely allows its \textit{bearer} to have a causal contribution (Henry’s view of power). But \textit{potentia} can also refer to potentiality, that is, what is in potency or possibly as opposed to what actually is. In this sense, \textit{potentia} refers to something’s mode of being, which mode is opposed to actually being. Note that this sense of possibility as opposed to something actual should be distinguished from other larger senses of possibility such as, for example, being possible as opposed to being impossible. For example, many things are possible as opposed to impossible, but only some of these possible things are possible as opposed to actual. Moreover, this restricted sense of possibility becomes even more restricted when what is meant by being in potency is to be possible in relation to natural change and not possible in relation to an act of creation. Thus, what can possibly be created
as opposed to what is actually created falls outside the scope of this very restricted sense of possibility.

There are different ways of thinking about the relation between the two concepts, power and natural potentiality or possibility. One way to envisage this relation is to consider that the abilities to undergo change or to cause change—in other words, what it is to have a power—only allow a thing to be in a certain way. For example, having the power to heat allows heat to cause heat, but this mode of being of heat is different from the mode of being of heat when heat heats something. This way of thinking of powers reduces them to potentialities: things that have powers enjoy a potential mode of being, one that is distinguished from both actuality and nothingness. Moreover, if having a power to φ is a potential way of being φ, then for that power to manifest, something must be done to it, that is, the power needs activation or stimulation. Indeed, this is only natural, given that by having the power to φ, according to this understanding, something is only potentially φ. As some contemporary authors remark, according to such a view, “the power has been disempowered and, instead, all its active nature transferred to the so-called stimulus.” Another way of envisaging the relation between power and potentiality is to consider that powers explain or ground what is possible for their bearers in the natural world, but things having powers are not potential beings, although in virtue of these powers there is a range of possibilities open for them. When circumstances permit it, actual things having powers are ready to enter into causal interactions with other things having powers. In what follows, I am interested in which of these two is the way in which Henry envisages the relation between power and potentiality. But first, I must show what sense of potentia Henry uses in his explanation of self-motion.

When Henry uses the term potentia in [Text 2], he must mean potency as a mode of being, opposed to what is actual. Since in [Text 3], which immediately follows [Text 2], Henry also uses the term ‘potency’, he must mean again potency as a division of being. Note that [Text 3] claims that the will, while being in potency to an act of volition, can at the same time have a power to produce that act. When taken out of the context, this text might be interpreted to refer to having a passive power for the act of volition, but the context strongly suggests that Henry does not refer to a passive power, but to being in potency to the act of volition. Moreover, in [Text 5], which comes from the same

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14 This seems to be Michael Frede’s view. He says that powers only confer on the bearer of these abilities “a certain degree of reality,” for “something which did not exist at all could not be able to undergo a change.” See Frede, “Aristotle’s Notion of Potentiality in Metaphysics Θ,” 184.

context as the previous texts, he adds that the will can bring itself from potency to act. All these texts argue for the view that having a power to produce an act, which Henry says is a form of being actual, is not opposed to being in potency with respect to that act—this act and potency are not complementary. In these texts, Henry does not refer to the self-mover having passive powers. But if ‘potency’ does not refer to passive power, to what exactly does the term refer?

Consider two cases: a non-existent tree is in potency to being generated and a wall is in potency to being white. A tree is in potency when it is possible for it to be brought about or to be generated in the natural world—it is the terminus of a process of generation. While the tree is in potency, it does not yet exist; when it does exist, it is no longer in potency. The sense of ‘potency’ is different when we say that a wall is in potency to being white, for we do not mean that it is possible for whiteness to be brought about in a wall—we mean that the wall can become white. Note that we do not make a claim about the terminus or end-product of this alteration. Of course, when the wall becomes white, there is whiteness in the wall as well as an accidental composite of wall and whiteness, but the claim that the wall is in potency to being white is not about these two cases. What the claim is about instead is that something can make a causal contribution to the alteration process; that is, we make a claim about how the wall can be the subject of or suffer an alteration. This potentiality or possibility to becoming a subject in a change is also opposed to actually being a subject in a change: when the wall finally receives the form of whiteness, so when it is finally a subject for whiteness, there is no possibility for it to become a subject, for that possibility has been replaced by its complementary actuality. In what follows, I will argue that this second sense of being in potency, namely, being in potency as a subject in a change, is probably what Henry has in mind when he says that a self-mover is in potency to an act for which it also has a power.

Henry acknowledges the two kinds of potencies mentioned above, namely being in potency as a terminus of a change and as a subject of a change. He labels them objective and subjective potency respectively:

[Text 6] [S]omething is said to be in potency with respect to a certain act in a twofold manner: either insofar as it is the subject from which something is produced, in the way matter, from which a man is generated, is said to be in potency so that from it a man would be generated;
in another way [something is said to be in potency] as the object that is producible and is the end of the production, in the way a man is said to be in potency to being generated.\textsuperscript{16}

Something is in objective potency if it is possible for it to be produced at the end of a process of change. For example, a tree is in objective potency if it is possible for it to be generated in matter, and whiteness is in objective potency if it is possible for it to be brought about in something. Henry further explains that such an end-product is something, that is, a thing falling under one of the categories; it is out of something, namely out of matter; and it is produced by something, namely by an agent.\textsuperscript{17}

Thus, something is in objective potency when it does not yet exist; but it can exist by being brought about by an agent from something else. Only things pertaining to a category can be in objective potency, and thus not only substances but also accidents can be in objective potency.

Something is in subjective potency, not as that which will be the end-product of a change, but as that from which something can be produced, that is, as a subject that will receive a form and will become a constituent of something else. Note that in explaining subjective potency, Henry refers to something being produced and to something acting on what is in subjective potency. A thing in subjective potency is such that an agent can act on it to bring about something else.

To explain subjective potency, Henry uses the example of matter. But before understanding how matter is in subjective potency, we need to understand some aspects of matter. First, in contrast to some of his contemporaries, Henry takes matter to be something absolute, the essence of which is different from the essence of any form: matter has its own being and essence and is the subject that...

\textsuperscript{16} See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} VIII, q. 9 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 314vM): “aliquid dicatur esse in potentia respectu alicuius actus dupliciter, aut ut subjectum de quo aliquod habet produci, quemadmodum materia de qua habet generari homo, dicitur esse in potentia ut de ipsa generetur homo; alio modo ut obiectum quod est ipsum productibile et terminus productionis, quemadmodum homo dicitur esse in potentia ut generetur.” The distinction appears in different places: \textit{Quodl.} VI, q. 3, 43; \textit{Quodl.} X, 7, 152–153; \textit{Quodl.} XI, 3, 443G–vH; \textit{SQO}, art. 59, q. 2, fol. 138rN. On the distinction between objective and subjective potency see Ludwig Hödl, “Neue Begriffe der Seinerkenntnis im Einflussbereich des Heinrich von Gent,” in \textit{Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter: Ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung; Vorträge des II. Internationalen Kongresses für Mittelalterliche Philosophie, Köln, 31. August – 6. September 1961}, ed. Paul Wilpert and Willehad Paul Eckert, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1963), 611. For subjective and objective potency in relation to things to be created see also Pasquale Porro, “Possibilità ed esse essentiae in Enrico de Gand,” in \textit{Henry of Ghent: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on the Occasion of the 700th Anniversary of his Death (1293)}, ed. W. Vanhamel (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 211–53. Porro says that the distinction between subjective and objective potency is “one of the most characteristic and original feature” of Henry’s metaphysics. However, it is not clear to me that this distinction originates with Henry. In \textit{Quodl.} XI, q. 3, referring to some people, Henry notes that they “dicunt ergo primo quod possible aliud est subjective aliud terminative, quod et nos concedimus” (See Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} XI, q. 3, fol. 443vG). This suggests that other people also maintain the same distinction.

\textsuperscript{17} See Henry of Ghent, \textit{SQO}, art. 59, q. 2 (1520 Badius 2: fol. 138rN): “Omne quod generatur est aliquod et ab aliquo et per aliquod. Ubi dicit Commentator: Est aliquod id est aliquid praedicamentorum, et ab aliquo, ut materia, et per aliquid, et est agens.”
can receive any suitable form. 18 Second, matter has a power—this power is the essence of matter under an aspect of relatedness to all the forms that it can receive. For matter to have this power, its essence alone is sufficient—this means that matter has this power neither because it serves as a subject in transmutation nor because it is in act under a form. 19 Third, matter can be a subject in three ways. Matter is a subject because before taking any form, it is able to take them: this is the case of matter right before it is united with the first form, and in this sense, matter is an ‘absolute subject’. It is also a subject in generation, for while it is actualized by a form, it can take upon a new form. Finally, it is a subject insofar as being under a form, it is the subject for the being of this form: it is a subject that is actualized by a form. 20 It is important to note two points that Henry makes about the power of matter: this power is grounded in matter’s essence and it grounds its role as a subject. Indeed, matter is a subject (in generation) because it has a power, and while being actualized by a form it can immediately acquire a new form when the previous form is destroyed. 21

Given this understanding of the role of matter as a subject, Henry further explains in what moment in the process of generation matter is in subjective potency, for it is matter’s role as subject in generation that is relevant for understanding how matter is in subjective potency. According to Aristotelian physics, generation takes place at an instant. But, Henry claims, although generation happens at an instant, nevertheless, in order to make this process intelligible one needs to identify

18 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. IV, q. 14 (Leuven 8: 186): “‘Materia’ nominat substantiam quandam absolutam in quantum materia est, differentem per essentiam a qualibet forma et a qualibet dispositione formali, et est fundamentum susceptivum omnium.” Note that substantiam is not taken in the sense of substance (one of the categories), but in the sense of something staying under (from substare).

19 Ibid.: “‘Potentia’ vero nominat essentiam materiae sub quodam respectu ad formas susci piendas sub indiffer entia ad omnes, et hoc in quantum nec est in motu vel transmutatione ad aliquam illarum nec similiter in actu sub aliqua carum, nec ut est determinata sive disposita ad transmutationem in aliquam formam determinatam. Et sic ‘potentia’ nominat respectum fundatum in essentia materiae, et ex se, non ex alio, quod in materia differente re ab ipsa.”

20 Ibid., 188–89: “materia dicitur subjectum secundum triplicem statum: uno scilicet pri usquam actu transmutatur ad formam, et dicitur subjectum absolute; alio in quantum iam actu transmutatur ad formam, et tune dicitur quod est subjectum generationis et ens in potentia, medium inter non-ens purum, quod nihil est omnino, et ens simpliciter […] tertio modo in quantum actu est sub forma, et tune habet in actu esse illius formae, ad quam quantum.”

21 Ibid., 186: “Subjectum’ vero appelatur ipsa materia cum potentia iam dicta, et hoc in quantum est actu sub tali forma, ut per illius corruptionem unica transmutatione et immediate potest transmutari in alteram formam.” Potentia iam dicta refers to the power of matter for the forms to be received, for this text continues the text mentioned in note 19 above. Immediate is opposed to mediate and it is linked with the distinction between the remote and proximate potency of matter. Henry uses the term potentia propinqua to distinguish matter in immediate and remote potency. Matter in remote potency is matter that needs to undergo multiple changes to get actualized; matter in immediate potency needs to undergo only one kind of change. Ibid., 186–88.
three non-temporal moments or three moments of nature in it.\(^{22}\) First, there is the moment when the previous form gets corrupted; second, there is the moment when matter is without any form; third, there is the moment at which we have a new form.\(^{23}\) For example, according to Aristotelian physics, bronze is generated out of earth. This means that at the instant in which the form of bronze is generated, one must distinguish three non-temporal moments: first, the moment at which the form of earth is corrupted, second, an intermediary moment at which matter is without any form, and third, the moment at which the new form of bronze is brought about. While bronze is in objective potency as the end-product of the generation, matter is in subjective potency to being generated, that is, to becoming actualized by a form or to becoming a subject of a form. Matter is not in subjective potency to being generated in all three moments of the generation process, but only in the second moment: in the first and third moments, matter is under a certain form (earth and bronze respectively), and so it can no longer be generated, at this second moment of nature matter is without any form and so is able to become part of a composite of matter and form. Why is matter in subjective potency only at this moment? Because only at this moment, does it have a being that is suitable to being actualized, for it is without any forms and so is able to acquire other forms. In the first and third moments, matter is already part of a hylomorphic composite; it is only in this second moment that matter can become part of such a composite, and so is in potency to it because it can be the subject in which a form inheres. Note that Henry thinks that matter can become part of a composite of matter and form because at this


\(^{23}\) See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 59, q. 2 (1520 Badius 2: fol.138rP–vQ): “sciendum est quod in naturali generatione duplex est transmutatio simul in codem instanti temporis, scilicet corruptio unius formae et generatio alterius. Naturaliter tamen prior est corruptio et posterior generatio, ita quod secundum Philosophum VIII Physicorum signum illud sive instans idem secundum rem in quo fiunt debet distinguiri in prius et posterius secundum rationem, et fit corruptio in priori, generatio in posteriori, ita quod non dicetur proprie materia esse in potentia propinqua ad generationem nisi posteriore signo in quo iam est denudata a forma priori per corruptionem et sic in potentia propinqua existent ut non solum non eget nisi uno motore sed etiam non nisi una transmutatione ut exeat in actu. Quo posito, licet materia existens in potentia propinqua in codem instanti temporis simul transmutatur et transmutata est existens actu sub forma genitae tamen hic similiter operatur unum instans secundum rem et secundum unam rationem generalerum dividere in duo secundum rationes speciales et naturaliter in priori transmutatur et est in potentia ad formam et in posteriori transmutata est et in actu sub forma. Et est materia in illo priori proprie medium inter ens et non ens nec est per illo signo potentia generandi in corrupto nec in generato, sed in ipsa materia sola, ut sic media est et subjectum transmutationis quae est via ad generationem ut sic num instans secundum rem distinguamus secundum tria signum differentia sola ratione. Quorum primum est in quo sit corruptio, tertium in quo sit generatio, medium in quo est transmutatio ad generationem.”
second moment matter has a kind of being that is between pure non-being and being in act. Thus, matter is in subjective potency to receiving a form and thus to becoming a constituent or part of a hylomorphic composite, because while devoid of forms, it has a certain being and essence (and power) that allows it to get actualized by a form.

Being in objective potency is opposed to what is actual. On the one hand, since it is opposed to what is actual, being in objective potency and being actual cannot coexist. This means that when a tree is in objective potency at the beginning of a process of generation, it is not yet actual. It becomes actual when it is generated, but then it is no longer in objective potency. Moreover, being in objective potency is the complement of being actual, and vice versa. Thus, being in objective potency is a mode of being that is opposed to being actual, that is, it is one of the two divisions of being.

It is less clear whether subjective potency is opposed to what is actual. According to some medieval authors, subjective potency is not opposed to what is actual because it is a principle of being. For example, William of Alnwick maintains this view. To defend it, he starts from the usual distinction between potency as a principle of being, that is, as an essential part of any being, and potency as a difference of being, that is, a mode of being which is opposed to being actual. According to Alnwick, subjective potency is a principle of being because it persists with the act and is almost as if perfected by the act. To show a case in which subjective potency persists with what is actual, Alnwick refers

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24 Ibid., fol. 138rN: “Generari enim sive esse id quod generatur in naturalibus, uno modo dicitur aliquid subjectivum, alio vero objective. Primo modo dicitur generari vel esse quod generatur subjectum sustinens actum generationis. Secundo autem modum illud quod productum est per actum generationis. […] Secundum quod de primo dicit Philosophus in secundo Metaphysicae: quemadmodum inter esse et non esse est generatio, ita semper id quod generatur est inter illud quod est ens et non ens. Addiscens enim est generatum scissior. Et intendit secundum Commentatorem quod sicut addiscens est medius inter omnino ignotam et perfecte scientem sic quod generatur ut materia et subjectum, semper medium est inter parum non ens et ens in actu, et hoc ideo quia ipsa est ens in potentia.”

25 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. XI, q. 3 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 443rG–vH): “Dicunt ergo primo quod possibile alius est subjectivum terminative quod et nos concedimus sed non est unum illorum sine altero quia agens non facit nisi compositum ex potentia et actu. Facere enim materiam non est facere quod materia sit materia quia cum materia semper sit materia, ad hoc non indiget factione. Sed facere materiam est facere quod sit sub forma et universaliter facere potentiam vel possibile est facere quod sit sub actu.” This is a reported view; however, when it comes to reject it, Henry does not reject this part, but only its applicability to understanding creation.


27 Ibid., 56–57: “Comparando autem potentia prout est principium entis ad potentiam prout est differentia entis, est dicendum quod potentia quae est principium entis est potentia subjectiva quia subicitur transmutationi et actu per quem perficitur; potentia vero quae est differentia entis non est potentia subjectiva, quia una differentiarum non subicitur alteri cui
to matter: while being in subjective potency, matter composes with form to make up a composite. He is not alone in considering subjective potency as a principle. 28 James of Ascoli also identifies subjective potency with a principle and says that it remains with an act because it makes a composition with it. 29

Sometimes Henry’s language suggests that he also maintains this view, but there is an argument that he does not. Henry attributes to matter in subjective potency a certain kind of being, one that makes it suitable to be combined with a form. This seems to qualify matter in subjective potency to be like a principle that can combine with form to make a composite. On the other hand, if subjective potency is a division of being, similarly to objective potency, it must also disappear when that to which is in potency becomes actual. As we have seen, this is exactly what happens, since Henry says that matter is in subjective potency only in the second moment of nature, when it is devoid of form. This means that when matter takes up the new form in the third moment of nature, it is no longer in subjective potency. So, the subjective potency of matter is not a principle.

If subjective potency is not a principle, then why does Henry sound as if he maintains this view? There are two aspects of Henry’s view that lend themselves to ambiguities. First, Henry says that matter in subjective potency has a certain kind of being, which is between pure non-being and actual being. The question is whether this being allows matter to be in subjective potency or whether this being is precisely the being of the subjective potency of matter. In my opinion, the potential being of matter allows it to be in subjective potency or grounds the subjective potency of matter. Thus, the subjective potency of matter to becoming a constituent is not a potential being. To say otherwise seems to confuse the role of something as a subject, and so as a principle, with its possibility of being such a principle or subject. More precisely, it is similar to confusing the wall as a subject, and so as a

opponitur sed potest dici potentia obiectiva secundum quam aliquid potest esse obiectum et terminus transmutationis et actionis agentis. […] accipitur prima differentia inter potentiam subiectivam quae est principium entis et inter potentiam obiectivam quae est differentia entis quia potentia subiectiva principium entis manet simul cum actu quasi ista potentia perficitur per actum et recipit actum cui subicitur.”

28 Ibid., 58: “quia potentia subiectiva, ut materia aquae generatur subiective, componit cum actu et faciunt unum compositum.”

principle of the alteration process, with its possibility of becoming white.\textsuperscript{30} Second, the subjective potency of matter is to become a subject of a change during which matter takes up a new form. Indeed, for something to be in subjective potency, that thing needs to be able to become a principle, that is, it needs to be able to play the role of a subject. It can become a subject in virtue of having a certain being that is fit to become a subject—in the case of matter, this is its potential being. Thus, matter in which a subjective potency is grounded will have a causal role, while the subjective potency of matter to become a principle does not.

What does this discussion about subjective and objective potency tell us about the relation between power and natural possibility? Both objective and subjective potency, as I have explained them here, are forms of natural possibilities—they are both related to change, either as the end-product of a change or as the subject of change. The discussion showed that for Henry, ultimately, \textit{potentia} as power is not only distinct from \textit{potentia} as objective and subjective potency in generation,\textsuperscript{31} but it also grounds them. Something is in objective potency because it can be brought about by an agent, that is, it is the object of an agent’s power. Moreover, \textit{potentia} as power also grounds \textit{potentia} as subjective potency. Something is in subjective potency because it exists, has a power, and can play the role of a subject in a change by entering into the constitution of what is principiated. For example, matter is in subjective potency because it has its own being, essence, and power, and, it can combine with a form to make a hylomorphic composite. Thus, Henry follows the second way of thinking about the relation between power and potentialities: instead of reducing powers to potentialities, he takes them to be the ground for potentialities. But one might object to this by saying that the power of matter seems to confer to matter a certain kind of being, namely potential being. Recall that according to the first way of thinking about the relation between power and potentialities, powers confer on their bearers only a potential way of being. However, to this objection, I would reply that for Henry,

\textsuperscript{30} Note, however, that this interpretation does not rule out that the subjective potency of matter, its possibility, has a kind of existence—I am only suggesting that the potential being of matter is not the being of its subjective potency. It is important not to rule out this case, for, indeed, Henry attributes to potency, that is, to possibility or potentiality, an ontological status, as one can see from his discussion of how an essence is in objective and subjective potency in creation.

\textsuperscript{31} Henry talks about objective potency in relation not only to things in generation but also to things to be created. Something to be created is the object of God’s power. I do not discuss this aspect of his view here. For objective and subjective potency in relation to essences to be created see \textit{SQO}, art. 59, q. 2. There Henry applies the distinction between objective and subjective potency to divine production (for example, the production of the Son in the Trinity) and creation. However, note that the notion of subjective potency is relevant only for creation. See Henry of Ghent, \textit{SQO}, art. 59, q. 2 (1510 Badius 2: fol. 138vQ): “Et propteram non est proprie in divinis quod generatur subjectiva quia nihil est ibi transmutabile, sed talis potentia passiva quodammodo habet esse in eis quae creatur.” For more on the issue of subjective and objective potency in creation see Porro, “Possibilità ed esse essentiae in Enrico de Gand.”
the power of matter is grounded in the special being and essence that matter has—it does not confer on matter a special being.

This discussion about subjective potency can shed light on the meaning of ‘potency’ in self-motion, although to my knowledge Henry never explains self-motion using this concept. In self-motion, something is at the same time virtually $\phi$ and $\phi$ in potency. The self-mover cannot be $\phi$ in objective potency, for $\phi$ being an accidental feature, if the self-mover is in objective potency to $\phi$, it will be in potency to become itself an accidental feature. For example, the will would be in potency to becoming itself an act of volition. This is obviously wrong, for the self-mover only receives $\phi$. It makes more sense to say that the self-mover is in something akin to subjective potency, for a self-mover is in potency to becoming a subject; that is, by receiving $\phi$ it will become a constituent of what is principiated. Recall what was said in chapter 3: according to Henry, what is principiated is not a feature, but something informed by a feature. Thus, the self-mover is in subjective potency to becoming a constituent of what is principiated. As matter is in subjective potency to becoming a constituent of a hylomorphic composite, so the self-mover must be in subjective potency to becoming a constituent of what is principiated in self-motion. For example, to say that the will is in subjective potency to the act of willing is to say that the will can combine with the act of will, and so that it becomes a constituent of a willing will, that is, a will informed by an act of volition, which is what is principiated in the self-motion of the will.

Understanding ‘potency’ in Henry’s Achilles argument as subjective potency also allows us to make sense of Henry’s claim that the self-mover is virtually and potentially $\phi$. For the self-mover to be in subjective potency, it needs to have a power, and to be such that it can receive the new form—recall that matter is in subjective potency only when it not only has the power to receive forms, but also is devoid of forms. For example, in the self-motion of the will, the soul is in subjective potency to the act of volition, because when it has a power to receive that act, it is also devoid of it. Thus, saying that a self-mover is in subjective potency does not rule out the possibility that the self-mover is also virtually $\phi$: to be in potency to $\phi$, the self-mover just needs to be without $\phi$, but to have a power to receive $\phi$ in virtue of a feature of its essence; to be virtually $\phi$, the self-mover needs to have a power to cause $\phi$, which it can have in virtue of another feature of its essence.32 There is no argument ruling

32 If someone is wondering what is the complement of the subjective potency of the self-mover, the answer is: the self-mover as actually being a constituent of what is produced. For example, the will in subjective potency is opposed to the will actually being composed with an act of volition so that together they make up what is the product or the principiatum in self-motion, a willing will.
out this possibility.

In short, self-motion is a case of principiation that involves one suppositum. This suppositum plays the role of an efficient cause in virtue of being virtually $\varphi$, that is, in virtue of having a power for $\varphi$. At the same time, the same suppositum plays the role of a constituent of what is principiated. To play this role, the suppositum needs to be in subjective potency to $\varphi$. Subjective potency, in contrast to objective potency, requires (1) the existence of something that can be in subjective potency, (2) the presence of a passive power for that to which the thing is in subjective potency, and (3) the lack of that to which the thing is in subjective potency: as matter must be devoid of forms so the self-mover must be without the act that it can receive. Being in subjective potency to $\varphi$ in this way, the self-mover can combine with $\varphi$ so that together they can principiate the principiatum.

Does the Achilles argument show how something can be in act and potency at the same time? Yes, but we need to note that Henry’s solution to the argument operates with different meanings of ‘act’ and ‘potency’. The self-mover is $\varphi$ in act because it has a power for $\varphi$, not because it is formally $\varphi$. The self-mover is also $\varphi$ in potency because it can combine with $\varphi$ so that they together principiate a thing informed by $\varphi$. While being in act $\varphi$ requires being virtually $\varphi$, that is, having a power for $\varphi$, being in potency to $\varphi$ is about the possibility of combining with $\varphi$ in order to principiate together something. However, what grounds this possibility for the act is the self-mover’s essence, its power, and the lack of the form that it can receive.

Here one might wonder why in his solution Henry resorts to using ‘potency’ in the sense of possibility instead of its sense of power. If my explanation is correct, Henry could have said that the same thing has an active and a passive power for $\varphi$. If he had done that, his solution would have been more elegant: he would have used the term ‘potency’ with the same meaning, namely that of power. He could have done that, but this would not have been an explanation for the possibility of self-motion. As I showed in chapter 3, Henry is interested in the composite that is principiated at the end of the causal interaction; he is not interested in the principiation of a form, which together with something will form a composite. Moreover, for him causal powers are what allow things to do or suffer something; they themselves do not cause anything.

7.1.3. Objections to Henry’s Achilles Argument

Henry’s Achilles argument for the possibility of self-motion is a version of the old objection that Aristotle’s second argument from Physics VIII.5 does not rule out self-motion in equivocal agents. But
we know that there are already several arguments that deal with the view that self-motion is possible in the case of equivocal agents. In chapter 2 I discussed two such objections, namely Simplicius’s objection that equivocal causation is *per accidens* causation and Aquinas’s objection that equivocal causation as a solution to self-motion faces problems similar to those faced by univocal causation. In this section I will briefly discuss how Henry can reply to these old objections.

For medieval philosophers, Simplicius’s objection that equivocal causation is a case of *per accidens* causation is simply unconvincing. As I said before, medieval authors allowed for cases of equivocal causation, which are not cases of *per accidens* causation. Thus, to answer Simplicius’s objection, one needs to show that self-motion, though it is a case of equivocal causation, is nevertheless a case of essential causation or *per se* causation. *Per se* causation differs from *per accidens* causation in virtue of the presence in the agent of suitable causal powers to produce the effect. For example, while a *per accidens* cause such as the chef who cooks a healthful meal does not have in virtue of being a chef a reliable causal power to produce healthful meals, a *per se* cause such as a fire, which causes the burning of a log, has a reliable causal power to produce the burning of logs. But if the presence of a reliable causal power to produce *φ* in itself is what it requires for *per se* causation, the self-mover is a *per se* agent. To see that a self-mover has such a reliable power, we just need to recall that in chapter 5, this issue was addressed in the discussion about how self-movers move themselves *per se* and primarily.

Nor does Aquinas’s argument pose difficulties for Henry. According to Aquinas, equivocal causation cannot be used to explain self-motion because it is too similar to univocal causation. Thus, even in equivocal causation, there must be some kind of similarity between the form in the agent and the form that the agent causes. Cast in Henry’s terms, Aquinas’s argument is that being virtually *φ* and being formally *φ* are two kinds of actuality between which there is some similarity. Aquinas further claims that this similarity is sufficient to rule out the possibility that the same thing is at the same time virtually and formally *φ*. But why exactly does Aquinas think that the similarity between being virtually

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33 Aquinas uses this term in different contexts. For example: God is said to virtually contain all things he created (*SCG* II, cap. 15, 7); the sun and the stars virtually contain the powers to produce maggots (*ST* I, q. 105, art. 1, ad 1); powers of the soul are virtually contained in the intellective soul (*ST* III, q. 50, art. 4, ad 2); the elements are said to be virtually contained in the mixture (*De mixtione elementorum*). On the problem of what virtually means for Thomas Aquinas, especially in connection with the problem of how elements are in the mixture see Thomas Aquinas, *Aquinas on Matter and Form and the Elements: A Translation and Interpretation of the De principiis naturae and the De mixtione elementorum of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Joseph Bobik (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998); Christopher Decaen, “Elemental Virtual Presence in St. Thomas,” *The Thomist* 64, no. 2 (2000): 271–300. Christopher Shields uses Aquinas’s notion of virtual containment to explain how Suárez sees the powers of the soul as contained in the soul. See Shields, “Virtual Presence.”
φ and formally φ rules out the possibility of self-motion? Unfortunately, Aquinas does not have any argument for why this is the case except that ‘being virtually φ’ is traditionally used precisely because ‘being formally φ’ cannot be used. For example, God virtually contains all things, but he cannot be any of them; the sun is virtually warm but is impossible for it to be formally warm; the elements exist virtually in the mixture because they cannot formally exist in it. Thus, Aquinas would claim that something is virtually φ precisely because it cannot be formally φ, and so self-motion is not possible. As we have seen, Henry insists that ‘virtually φ’ and ‘formally φ’ must refer to actualities of different kinds, and so there is no contradiction in an agent being both virtually φ and formally φ. In some subjects, being virtually φ can indeed be opposed to being formally φ, but this happens not because the actualities corresponding to them are opposed in themselves. So Henry would reply that there is nothing in the definitions of these two terms that prohibits their application to the same thing.

What should Henry say if there is a reason why ‘virtually φ’ and ‘formally φ’ cannot be said of the same thing at the same time? Godfrey of Fontaines provides such a reason. Like Aquinas, Godfrey accepts that some agents virtually contain features. He also agrees with Aquinas and Henry that to virtually possess φ means to have the ability to bring about φ. However, like Aquinas, Godfrey insists that virtually having φ refers to having φ in a certain way. Recall that agents that are virtually φ are equivocal agents. But even in equivocal causation the agent is similar to its effect. Godfrey usually explains this by saying that the equivocal agent possesses a higher or a more universal version of the form that is in the effect. Thus, when an agent virtually possesses φ, the agent formally possesses a better version of φ—call it nobilior φ. But, as Godfrey observes, there is an absurdity in something that is virtually φ to make itself formally φ. Precisely because virtually φ means that the agent possesses nobilior φ, if an agent that is virtually φ were to cause φ in itself, then two qualities, one the better version of the other, will perfect the same agent.34

The force of this objection rests on how much distinction there is between nobilior φ and φ. One alternative we need to reject is that there is a distinction of degree. Were this the case, then we would indeed be dealing with a univocal agent. The other alternative is to consider the distinction

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34 See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* V1, q. 7 (PhB 3: 151): “Sicut enim contra rationem eius quod formaliter est tale quale debit facere passivum est quod ex quo iam est tale faciat se tale, quia iam esset in actu et in potentia secundum idem et respectu eiusdem, item essent in codem numero et subiecto plura accidentia numero differentia et plura alia inconvenientia sequerentur; ita etiam contra rationem eius quod virtualiter est tale quale debit facere passivum formaliter est quod ex quo iam est tale eminentiori et perfectiori modo, quia est principale agens quod faciat se tale minus perfecto modo. Inconveniens etiam est quod qualitas secundum quam agens aliquid tale dicitur virtute et qualitas secundum quam aliquid tale dicitur formaliter illi correspondens, cum haec dicantur esse talia non univoce sed aequivoce, quod sint perfectiva unius et eiusdem subiecti; et cetera.”
between *nobilior* \( \varphi \) and \( \varphi \) as a distinction in kind, and in fact this is how the distinction is considered.\(^{35}\) But if the two features are sufficiently distinct, Godfrey’s point is no longer persuasive. Thus, when Henry answers an objection similar to the one raised by Godfrey, his strategy is to show that possessing both *nobilior* \( \varphi \) and \( \varphi \) has a purpose. He starts from emphasizing that there is a difference between equivocal agents. For example, the sun, which is an agent with an indeterminate and universal power, would degrade itself if it caused heat in itself, because the sun does not have in its nature to be hot. On the other hand, causing in itself an act of volition will not degrade the will, because it is in the nature of the will to have such an act.\(^{36}\) In short, Henry’s claim is that the feature that the self-mover causes in itself contributes to the self-mover’s overall perfection. This is consistent with the view that the features a self-mover causes in itself are its own operations. Thus, it makes sense for an agent to possess two features, which despite being somehow similar are nevertheless distinct in kind.

Besides developing Aquinas’s objection, Godfrey also raises his own objections against Henry. One of the most interesting is the following: let us take a self-mover \( A \). If Henry is right, then at the same time, \( A \) as a whole (in virtue of a feature \( \varphi \)) must virtually contain \( \varphi \) and (in virtue of a feature \( \psi \)) be in potency to \( \varphi \). Now imagine that \( A \)’s potency for \( \varphi \) is completed by \( A \) acquiring \( \varphi \). When this happens, Godfrey says, the whole of \( A \) is perfected by \( \varphi \), so that nothing is left in \( A \) untouched by this perfection. But if this is so, then the part of \( A \) in virtue of which \( A \) is virtually \( \varphi \) must be perfected. But if this part is indeed perfected, then it means that this part was in fact in potency to \( \varphi \).\(^{37}\) To answer

\(^{35}\) See Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 4, art. 3 (Piana: 26a): “Cum enim omne agens agat sibi simile inquantum est agens, agit autem unumquodque secundum suam formam, necesse est quod in effectu sit similitudo formae agentis. Si ergo agens sit contentum in eadem specie cum suo effectu, erit similitudo inter faciens et factum in forma, secundum eandem rationem speciei; sicut homo generat hominem. Si autem agens non sit contentum in eadem specie, erit similitudo, sed non secundum eandem rationem speciei, sicut ea quae generantur ex virtute solis, accedunt quidem ad aliquam similitudinem solis, non tamen ut recipiant formam solis secundum similitudinem speciei, sed secundum similitudinem generis.”

\(^{36}\) See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 455rS): “Quod ergo primo argueretur ad quaestionem principaliter quod si voluntas faceret se in actu, esset virtute tale et ita nobilius etc. Dicendum secundum iam dicta quod hoc quod hoc solum verum est de tali virtute universali et indeterminata, non autem de eo quod est virtute determinata tale. Et ideo nobilius est voluntati vel secundum actum quam secundum virtutem quia quod est virtute tale, non solum est tale ad agendum id quo fit actu tale, sed etiam ad recipiendum illud in se, non sic autem quod est tale virtute universali et ideo non potest se facere tale actione sive formaliter, et nobilius est ei se non facere tale quam facere.”

\(^{37}\) See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VII, q. 6 (PhB 3: 344): “Quod autem ponuntur incompossibilia sic dicendo in sole et consimiliter in omnibus aliis patet nam dicitur quod actus qui est completivus potentiae et illa potentia repugnantiam habent nec simul sunt constat quod, si calor cuiuscumque conditionis non existens in sole in ipso causari deberet quocumque agente, totus sol et quicquid esset in sole ante adventum talis caloris esset subiectum unum susceptivum talis caloris, et sic talis calor esset completivus potentiae solis secundum substantiam et secundum omnes dispositiones suas in ipso existentes; non potest enim intelligi quod calor supernovens subingredereget quasi inter substantiam solis et eius dispositiones praecedentes, sic quod perfecter substantiam solis sine dispositionibus praeecedentibus, ex quo enim est unum subiecto secundum se totum est in potentia ad omnia quibus esse potest perfectibilis ergo illud quo dicitur calidus
this objection, the concept of subjective potency is useful. Note that Godfrey makes a series of inferences. He starts from the claim that (1) A as a whole is perfected by receiving φ. From this, he deduces that (2) A as a whole is in potency to φ. Finally, from (2), he deduces that (3) A cannot have an active power for φ. Henry can agree with claims (1) and (2) and reject (3), for Godfrey can infer (3) from (2) only if he takes ‘potency’ in the sense of objective potency. Only if A as a whole is in objective potency to φ, can A fail to have any active or passive power for φ. Recall that objective potency requires an agent, which brings what is potency to act, and does it out of something; in generation, it brings the end-product about out of matter. If A as a whole is in objective potency to φ, then there must be an agent other than A to bring about φ. If, however, A is in subjective potency to φ, then A can have an active power for φ. Since being in subjective potency to φ means that A can play the role of a substratum to φ, this way of being in potency does not rule out that A can also play a more active role with respect to φ. In other words, although the causation and the receiving of a feature might be attributed to the whole thing (actions and passions, Henry thinks, pertain to the suppositum), this happens in virtue of different aspects of the whole thing.

7.2. Scotus’s Reply to Aristotle
Like Henry, Scotus appeals to equivocal causation to reply to Aristotle’s argument about act and potency in self-motion. Because in his solution Scotus uses some elements from his discussion about potentia as principle, in the end, his answer to the Aristotelian argument departs in important ways from Henry’s. In this section and the following ones, I will explore some of these differences.

7.2.1. Scotus’s Solution
After criticizing what he takes to be Henry’s solution to the problem of the self-motion of the will,38

actu virtute esset subiectum caloris formalis et illum efficeret non solum in substantiam ipsius solis, sed etiam in se ipsum quia per se in totum compositum.”

38 See Scotus, QDV IX, q. 14, n. 76 (OPh 4: 655–56): “Ad secundum, de actu et potentia, dicitur quod in movente se quandoque sunt plura differentia secundum intentionem, secundum quorum unum movet se et secundum alterum movetur. Et ita non primo movet idem se, quoad praeecedens argumentum, nec secundum idem est in actu est in potentia quoad istud secundum argumentum.” The alleged solution of Henry proposes that something moves itself according to a feature of itself and is moved according to another feature. These features are only intentionally distinct. Given what I said especially in the previous sections, this is not Henry’s solution. For Henry understands self-motion in terms not of two powers, but of power and possibility. However, Scotus’s arguments, although unfair to Henry, start from Henry’s often confused claims about how the will moves itself. More precisely, they target Henry’s claim that the will moves itself insofar as it is free and is moved insofar as it is a nature. Scotus takes this to mean that (1) the will as a nature refers to the will’s
Scotus presents one solution in terms of equivocal causation. What he says is not new: he points out that if potency is taken as a modality of being, namely as being in potency as opposed to being actual, then, indeed, nothing can be in act and potency according to the same thing at the same time. This means that a self-mover cannot be formally $\varphi$ and $\varphi$ in potency at the same time. But in self-motion, a self-mover is said to be in act insofar as it has an equivocal active principle with respect to a \textit{terminus}—it is virtually $\varphi$; at the same time, it is in potency with respect to that \textit{terminus}. Such a self-mover is an equivocal agent. Thus, Scotus agrees that self-motion is impossible in univocal agents because such agents are in act insofar as they possess a certain feature, but would also have to be in potency with respect to it, so for univocal agents to be self-movers, what is required is precisely the situation that the Aristotelian argument prohibits. But a self-mover can be an equivocal agent: such an agent is in act because it can bring about a certain feature, but it can also be in potency with respect to that feature, for it can receive that feature.

Since Scotus offers a second solution to Aristotle’s argument, one that is more in agreement with his own views, let us inquire why the first solution might appear unsatisfactory to him. The issue is important, since the first solution, because it appeals to potency as a modality of being, uses concepts similar to those used in Henry’s solution to Aristotle’s argument. So why would Scotus reject what seems to be Henry’s solution? The reason is that Henry and Scotus understand the concepts involved in this solution differently, for they have different views about what the \textit{principiatum} and the principles in self-motion are. Recall that according to Henry, the principle in any case of causation is a \textit{suppositum}, while the \textit{principiatum} is a \textit{suppositum} informed by a certain form. For example, in a case in which a fire heats a pot, the fire is the active principle, the pot is the passive principle, while the heated pot is a genus (the will as an appetitive power), while the will as free refers to its specific difference (the will as a free appetitive power), and (2) the will as a nature is intentionally distinct from the will as free.

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39 See Scotus, \textit{QSM} IX, q. 14, n. 82 (OPh 4: 657–58): “Propter istam rationem specialiter, (quae posset bene declarari), potest dici alter ad argumentum quod si ‘potentia’ accipiatur prout opponitur actui — quo modo sermo habitus est de ipsa in primis duabus quaestionibus huius IX —, numquam idem est simul in actu et in potentia secundum idem. Nam quando est aqua calida actu, tunc non est actu frigida, sed potentia tantum. Et cum arguitur: ‘si est motiva sui ad frigiditatem, ergo est in actu talis quale est mobile in potentia’, fallacia consequentis est, intelligendo de actu formali. Non enim sequitur: ‘sol est transmutativus materiae per putrefactionem ad formam vermis, ergo sol est in actu vermis’. Si enim ad agendum effectum sufficit perfectio activa quandoque eiusdem rationis cum illa quae est in effectu, quanto magis sufficit excellenter? Et sic agens quodcumque equivoque est in actu respectu effectus, non formaliter habens actum similem, quia tunc non esset agens equivoque, sed est virtualiter habens, quia seilicet formaliter habet ememinentorem.”


41 The issues touched upon here both in relation to Henry’s view as well as in relation to Scotus’s view were discussed at length in chapter 3.
the principiatum or the product of this causal interaction. Similarly, in self-motion the self-mover is a suppositum, while the principiatum is the same suppositum but informed by a form. For example, in the self-motion of a heavy element, the element composed of matter and form, and insofar as it has heaviness, is the principle of its motion, while the principiatum is the element informed by motion. Thus, for self-motion to be possible, the suppositum needs to have an active power and to be in subjective potency to a form or operation; when self-motion occurs, the self-mover itself becomes a constituent of the principiatum in virtue of having a passive power to receive that form or operation. For Scotus, in contrast, both the principle in principiation and what is principiated are forms; that is, neither of them is a suppositum or is a compound of a suppositum and a form. For example, in the case of the fire that heats the pot, the heat in the fire is the active principle, which together with a passive principle in the pot, causes heat in the pot: the principiatum is the form of heat, and not the heated pot, as Henry has it. Thus, in self-motion, an essence has both an active and a passive principle for a form or operation; it is this form that is the principiatum in self-motion. However, using the concepts of potency as a modality of being, Scotus can offer only a very impoverished explanation for how the principiatum—that is, the form or operation of the self-mover—is principiated or caused. Why? To be in subjective potency, a self-mover must be able either to play the role of a subject for the form (the principiatum) in the way Henry proposes, or to be the subject for the being of the form (for example, water, while cooling itself, is in subjective potency to become cold water). But none of these cases explains how the form is principiated, for both refer to what would happen once the form is already principiated. Thus, if one is interested in how the form is principiated, as Scotus is, what happens after principiation is irrelevant. In short, in the context of Scotus’s view about principiation, the solution by appeal to potency as a modality of being is not an explanation of how self-motion is possible, but more a crude description of some of its aspects.

Given this, it is not surprising that Scotus proposes another solution to the Aristotelian argument:

[Text 7] If, however, potency is taken insofar as it means a relationship of a principle, […] then it refers either to the relationship of a principle to what is principiated or else it refers to the [relationship of a principle] to another principle.43

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42 In section 7.6 below I discuss the difference between Henry’s and Scotus’s understanding of subjective potency. The main point is that for Scotus, to be in subjective potency means to be able to receive not a form, but the being of a form.

In [Text 7], Scotus proposes an alternative reply to Aristotle's argument: instead of understanding 'potency' as a modality of being, that is, being potential as opposed to being actual, 'potency' should be understood as a principle, more precisely, it should be understood insofar as it is an essence that has an annexed necessary relation. Recall that principles can have relations either to what they principiate or cause, or to other principles together with which they principiate something. Thus, if 'potency' is understood as a principle, in analyzing whether a self-mover can be in act and potency at the same time, one needs to consider the relations of a principle.

Let us start with the alternative according to which potency is said about a principle that is in relation to what is principiated.44 Recall that for Scotus both what principiates or is a principle and what is principiated are forms. For example, the heat in a fire is a principle and it principiates another numerically distinct heat in a pot. If being in potency means to be a principle for what is principiated and being in act means being what is principiated, then no self-mover can be in act and potency at the same time, for the same one form would be a principle and also what is principiated. This means that a self-mover would be able to cause itself to exist, that is, it would be able to efficiently cause itself to be when it does not yet exist.45 Since this alternative does not make any sense, Scotus rejects it.

‘Potency’ as a principle is said not only in relation to what it is principiated, but also in relation to another principle. Consider first that these principles are intrinsic principles, matter and form. Thus, when a self-mover is in act and potency at the same time, what is meant is that in such a thing there are two principles that are related to each other: matter and form. This case is not impossible, unlike the first one. Indeed, in many things, matter and form are related to each other as potency and act, and together they principiate a hylomorphic compound.46 But it is also true that hylomorphic

relationem principii ad principiatum, aut ad alium principium.” On Scotus’s second solution see also King, “Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change.”

44 See Scotus, QΔM IX, q. 14, n. 84 (OPh 4: 658-59): “Si ad principiatum, ut illud principiatum dicatur ‘actus’, concedo quod nihil idem essentia fiet potentia et actus, quia nulla una essentia se ipsam principiat proprie effective, nec in quocumque genere principii.”

45 On this alternative Scotus recognizes a second possibility. Take the case of a suppositum in which there are two natures, one the principle and the other the principiatum. Such a suppositum can be said to be in potency and in act at the same time. However, he dismisses this case as not relevant, for this is not the usual sense in which one takes ‘to be in act’. See Scotus, QΔM IX, q. 14, n. 84 (OPh 4: 659): “Idem tamen suppositum potest in se habere duas naturas, quarum altera sit principium activum et altera principiatum, et ita est in potentia — hoc est ‘potens’ per principium activum — et in actu, sive actus, propter principiatum. Sed isto modo non consuevit communiter accipi ‘actus’ pro acto.”

46 See Scotus, QΔM IX, q. 14, n. 85 (OPh 4: 659): “Si autem ‘potentia’ dicit relationem principii ad actum ut ad alium principium intrinsecum, tunc accipere quod in nullo uno supposito est utrumque, est accipere quod nullum suppositum est sic principiabile. Et ita nullum suppositum esset compositum ex principio potentiali et principio quod dicitur actus, quod falsum est.”
Compounds are not called self-movers only because in them there are two principles, act and potency, that together principiate a hylomorphic compound. So, the second alternative, although it is possible, is irrelevant for self-motion.

Consider a third case: ‘potency’ is said again in relation to a principle, but unlike in the previous case, the principles are not related as matter and form—they are related as a passive principle is related to an active principle. For a self-mover, to be in act and in potency at the same time is to have an active and passive principle that mutually manifest or that together principiate the *principiatum*. It is in virtue of these two principles being able to work together that a thing is said to be a self-mover. Scotus observes that someone who rejects the possibility of self-motion just because nothing can be active and passive with respect to the same feature commits a *petitio principii*, for a self-mover is just a thing that has an active and passive principle that principally together.\(^\text{47}\) To reject self-motion, one needs to give a reason why an active and a passive principle cannot principally together. Scotus’s remark is probably aimed at Godfrey of Fontaines, who, as we will see in the next chapter, claims against Henry of Ghent that self-motion is not possible because nothing can be active and passive at the same time, but he fails to provide any good argument for the claim.\(^\text{48}\)

By suggesting that potency should be understood as a principle, and by analyzing the possible relationships a potency can have, Scotus offers a new explanation of how self-motion is possible: a self-mover has two principles that are fitted to bringing about an effect. What happens in self-motion, the bringing about of something, is explained in terms of causal powers. It is probably in this that Scotus’s main contribution to the discussion of self-motion consists.\(^\text{49}\) For by explaining self-motion in terms of principles and powers, Scotus changes the terms of the discussion of the possibility of self-motion. Before him, the defenders of self-motion focused on the issue of equivocal causality, being formally and virtually \(\varphi\)—recall that the solution in terms of equivocal causation is not Henry’s contribution to the debate, for this solution was already considered and rejected by Simplicius. While

\(^{47}\) See Scotus, Q\(\delta\)M IX, q. 14, n. 86 (OPh 4: 659): “Si tandem ‘potentia’ dicat relationem principii passivi ad principium activum quod dicitur esse in actu, scilicet activo, non autem dicitur actus, tune accipere quod nihil idem est in potentia et in actu, non est nisi sub aliis terminis exprimere istud quod ‘nihil idem est activum et passivum’. Et non est probatio a priori, sed est petitio, idem accipiendo sub aliis terminis ad probationem sui ipsius.”

\(^{48}\) One might say that in the end, Henry and Scotus make the same point: a self-mover has an active and passive power for \(\varphi\). Recall that Henry talks about being \(\varphi\) in potency, but given his understanding of the relation between power and subjectivity potency, he means by this that the self-mover has a passive power for \(\varphi\). Thus, for Henry too, a self-mover has an active and a passive power for \(\varphi\), just as Scotus too says. To see the differences between their views, we need to know more about the nature of active and passive powers. I will return to this issue and this objection in the next chapter.

\(^{49}\) See also King, “Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change,” 260.
Henry adds to this debate a more precise explanation of what happens in self-motion, by distinguishing the different causal contribution that the same suppositum has, Scotus focuses the debate on the alleged impossibility of something being active and passive at the same time. We will see more on this issue in the next chapter.

7.2.2. Scotus and the Log That Burns Itself

After giving his own solution to Aristotle’s argument, Scotus mentions a few objections against it. In this section I will focus on only one of them, an objection raised by Godfrey of Fontaines, namely his challenge for Henry to prove that, if self-motion is possible, a log does not burn itself. There are two reasons for picking this objection. First, it is a well-known and powerful objection. Indeed, Scotus discusses it in different works, not just in QSM IX, q. 14. In Ord. I, d. 3, pars 3, q. 2, he even describes it as the best argument (achillem eorum) of those who reject self-motion. Second, this is an objection I have already discussed in relation to Henry of Ghent. So, discussing it again will be another occasion to see how similar or different Scotus’s and Henry’s views are.

Scotus renders the objection in the following way:

[Text 8] Thirdly, it is argued through a counterexample. According to the aforesaid response, one would have to say that any action in something is from an agent acting on itself, for instance, it is the wood that heats itself, not the fire which is only a sine qua non cause, as some assume the object with respect to the power to be only a sine qua non cause for an act. This is confirmed: act and potency are no more incompatible in one thing than in another. Therefore, if an act can exist without repugnancy with potency in something, then they are compatible wheresoever they may be found. And if in one case their incompatibility is denied, then it should be denied everywhere. And then there would seem to be nothing one could use to disprove that anything whatsoever, if it is in potency to something, is also in act in respect to the same.  

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According to Scotus, the point of Godfrey’s argument is that once self-motion is accepted as possible, then everything could be considered a self-mover. Thus, Godfrey requires a reason why some things are not self-movers, for if a thing can be both virtually and formally \( \varphi \), then anything can be so. But then, how can one distinguish self-movers from non-self-movers? Or as Godfrey put it, “who indeed will prove that a log or a certain object is made hot by fire?”

Note that there are two ways of understanding Godfrey’s counterexample about the log that burn itself in the presence of the fire as a sine qua non cause. The usual interpretation is that Godfrey requires a way to distinguish cases of self-motion from cases of transeunt causation. This is how Henry understands the argument and how Scotus usually discusses it. In chapter 3, I argued that there is another way of interpreting this example, one that is about causation and not so much about self-motion. More precisely, I argued that Godfrey challenges Henry to provide a way to distinguish essential causes from sine qua non causes: given Henry’s commitment to self-motion and his introduction of sine qua non causes, without such a distinction between per se and sine qua non causes any case of causation can be interpreted as a case in which there is a self-mover, while what appears as the agent is just a sine qua non cause.

In replying to the objection, Scotus acknowledges that the possibility of self-motion implies that to be virtually \( \varphi \) cannot be opposed to being formally \( \varphi \). If it is repugnant to something to be both virtually \( \varphi \) and formally \( \varphi \), this happens only because there is a third feature, which cannot be together with one of the previous two. For example, since according to Aristotelian physics, the sun is supposed to be unchangeable, it cannot cause heat in itself (for that would make it changeable: heat being a quality can become more or less intense), although it can cause heat in other things.

Scotus also tackles the challenge raised by Godfrey to prove that a log does not burn itself. In QSM IX, q. 14, he answers that Godfrey’s challenge is an issue that needs to be solved by appeal to

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52 See above chapter 3, [Text 5].

53 See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 14, n. 104 (OPh 4: 665–66): “Per hoc patet ad tertium, scilicet ad instantiam illam, nam concedo quod actus talis et talis, sive actus virtualis et potestia ad formalem, omnino in nullo repugnant, quia tunc ubique repugnarent. Potest tamen alterum illorum alciui tertio repugnare cui alter inest; et alciui tertio non; et alciui tertio utrumque repugnare. Et secundum hoc quandoque neutrum potest inesse, quandoque utrumque, quandoque hoc sine illo, quandoque e converso.”

54 Ibid., n. 105 (OPh 4: 666): “Quod ergo dicitur quod tunc non restat unde probetur quod lignum non calefit a se sed ab igne: Responsio: videntur isti ex defectu argumenti ad proposition suum dimittere partem opponentis et assumere partem respondentis, sustinendo impossibile. iam enim ad hoc veritur disputatio, ut contra talem solutionem arguens, probando quod lignum non calefacit se. Et dico quod ad hoc non acciperem argumentum ex repugnantia actuum praedictorum in eodem, sed aliunde. Et illae praemissae praecise nihil concluderent contra me in aliis quae dico a se moveri.”
principles and concepts other than the one used to defend the possibility of self-motion; however, he remains silent on what these concepts and principles are.\textsuperscript{55} One gets a more detailed answer from him in \textit{Reportatio} II, d. 25, \textit{q. un.}, where he explains that one way to see whether a certain case of causation is a case of self-motion is to inquire into the nature of the feature that is supposed to be caused by the self-mover. Recall that in self-motion, the features that are caused by a self-mover in itself are perfections: indeed, this is why self-motion needs to be posited, namely to account for how things can attain their own perfections. But in the case of the log burning itself, the log is supposed to cause in itself a feature, heat, which destroys the log. Thus, heat cannot be a perfection of the log, and so the log cannot be a self-mover in respect of heat.\textsuperscript{56} Of course, this answer does not take up the challenge of distinguishing essential causes from \textit{sine qua non} causes.

Scotus gives an even more detailed answer in \textit{Ord.} I, d. 3, pars 3, q. 2. In fact, to rule out that a log can burn itself in the presence of the fire as a \textit{sine qua non} cause, Scotus offers no less than three replies. First, he tries to rule out this case by arguing that the log cannot be the total efficient cause of its own burning.\textsuperscript{57} Something is a total efficient cause of a feature, if when brought together with a suitable passive principle and unimpeded, it causes this feature. Let us assume that the log is a self-mover. As a self-mover, the log is always in adequate proximity to itself, and so it should burn itself; but it does not. What can be the reason for this? If the log is taken as the total cause of its own burning, one must assume that it does not burn itself because there is a (perpetual) impediment so that only the presence of fire removes it. Scotus rejects this assumption, seemingly because he rejects that there can be such an impediment and thus that fire plays the role of a \textit{sine qua non} cause. He concludes that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid. Note that Scotus also accuses Godfrey of bad faith, namely of constructing an impossible case.
\item \textsuperscript{56} See Scotus, \textit{Op. Ox.} II, d. 25, \textit{q. un.}, n. 20 (Vivès 13: 213): “Sed rationabile est quod tam nobilis perfectio animae, cuiusmodi est voluntas, quae anima est in actu primo, possit exire in actu secundum, quo anima formaliter perficitur in actu secundo, nullo alio activo requisito; sed ad huius modi passiones, quae sunt calefieri et humectari, quibus corrupitur natura ligni et non perficitur, non potest poni rationabiliter ipsum lignum habere actum primum seu principium activum, quo active praesente igne, sicut causa sine qua non solum, reducat se ad actum illum secundum, quo natura ligni corrupitur.”
\item \textsuperscript{57} See Scotus, \textit{Ord.} I, d. 3, pars 3, q. 2, n. 521 (Vat. 3: 309): “Ad achillem eorum quod ‘quodlibet moveret se’, dico, sicut argutum est contra primam opinionem in excludendo causam ‘sine qua non’, quod nihil est totalis causa et perfecta et naturalis, effectiva aliqui sui; sed, si ponatur ‘hoc impediens’, amoveatur ipsum, et nullo modo impedimentum. Ergo si ipsum esset totalis causa activa respectu caloris, et ipsum est totalis causa receptiva, igitur semper esset calidum. [...] Ergo cum non posset poni ‘non causalitas totalis’ propter impedimentum, nec propter approximitatem, nec propter receptivem, conclutatur quod in ligno non est causalitas activa totalis.” Note that like Henry, Scotus also thinks that something can be in proximity to a suitable causal partner and impeded.
\end{itemize}
the log cannot be the total cause of its own burning. Once this conclusion is reached, Scotus further argues that the log cannot be even a partial cause of its own burning. To be a partial cause, the fire and the log need to be essentially ordered causes. Recall that two causes are essentially ordered only if their efficient causal contributions are of different kinds. Two men that push a boat are not two essentially ordered causes of the pushing of the boat, for their causal contribution is of the same kind. The fire and the log cannot be two essentially ordered causes, for it is not clear what causal contribution the log can make that would be different from that of the fire.

The first answer fails to rule out the log as a self-mover, for Scotus does not give any reason why there cannot be a (perpetual) impediment, one that is removed only by the presence of the fire. Indeed, a few paragraphs later, he implicitly recognizes this problem when he considers a rebuttal of his view. At the core of this rebuttal is the claim that the case of the log must be considered on the model of the will and the object of the intellect as a *sine qua non* cause. The rebuttal is correct: as the intellectual object is a *sine qua non* cause because it is prior in nature to the act of volition, so the presence of fire could be a *sine qua non* cause for the burning of the log, one that would be prior in nature to the log burning itself. But then how does one prove that the log does not burn itself?

Scotus considers a second reply to Godfrey’s challenge, one that is shorter and even less persuasive than the first one. The tactic of the reply is to restrict self-motion to the case of the will and to reject self-motion in the case of the log. The reason why self-motion is limited to the case of the will is the nature of the causation in volition: while the will when presented with intellectual objects might have an act of willing, nilling, or abstaining, logs situated in adequate proximity to a fire all burn. Scotus immediately recognizes that this answer cannot prove that the log does not burn itself, for it is expected by the defenders of self-motion that the will, being a free agent, acts in a different way than any natural self-mover.

Scotus’s final answer to Godfrey’s challenge is to devise a way to correctly identify the nature

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58 Ibid., n. 522 (Vat 3: 310–11): “Si dici ‘saltem dicam lignum esse causam partialem, ut praesente igne coagat ad calefactionem sui in ratione effectivi vel activi partialis’, – nec ista cavillatio valet, quia causae duae partiales non ponuntur respectu eiusdem effectus quando altera praecise habet totum effectum in virtute sua, univoce vel equivoco.”
59 Ibid., n. 524 (Vat 3: 312–13): “Ad ‘responsionem achilis’ instatur, quia lignum non calefaciet se nisi alio praesente ‘sine quo non’, sicut per te voluntas non volificat se nisi praesente objecto per cognitionem.”
60 Ibid., nn. 525-26 (Vat. 3: 313).
61 Ibid., n. 527 (Vat. 3: 313–14): “Tertio modo contra achillem. Quidquid patitur, ab aliquo patitur; ubi ergo non potest a se pati, oportet ponere quod ab alio, – ubi non potest poni quod ab alio, oportet ponere quod a se. Voluntas non potest
and causal powers of things. He starts from the case of the will: the will must be active with respect to its acts not only because otherwise it cannot be said to be in control of them, but also because it has such a passive power that only its active power can be proportionate to it. As a passive power, the will is indifferent to many acts—it can either will or nill the same object; a proportionate active power, Scotus contends, would also need to be indifferent to actively producing these acts. Since there is no active power other than the will (except God) that can indifferently cause all these kinds of acts, the will must be the active cause of its own volitions. A log, on the other hand, cannot be the complete cause of all its own acts because its active power is not fully proportionate to its passive power. The log is disposed to receiving distinct qualities, sometimes even contrary qualities or qualities that corrupt its nature. To be able to cause all these kinds of qualities, it would have to be an unlimited principle, which it is not. There is no rebuttal of this answer, so Scotus probably considers it a persuasive reply to Godfrey.

Scotus explains how to distinguish self-movers from non-self-movers: one needs to consider not only the causal powers of things, but also how these powers are proportionate to the powers of other things. Active and passive powers are directed to each other in virtue of their objects. Considering this, one decides whether a causal interaction is a case of self-motion or not. For example, to understand the nature of a thing’s passive powers, one starts from the properties a thing receives. In this way, Scotus tries to determine what is natural to a thing. Then one searches for the suitable or proportionate active power that can bring about the natural property. For example, one can inquire whether a natural property is also a perfection, for if it is then probably with respect to it the thing is a self-mover. Or one can inquire about how the property relates to other natural properties of the same thing: is this property caused by a different natural property of the same thing? Or is it contrary to other properties of that thing? Once a causal interaction is ruled out as a case of self-motion, one can focus on finding in other things the suitable active power to bring about that property.

On my interpretation, Godfrey’s example raises not only a question about how to decide whether something is a self-mover or not, but also about how to distinguish between per se and sine pati ab alio (non loquendo de Deo), tum quia tunc volitio non esset in potestate eius, tum quia tunc aliquod aliiud movens – codem modo se habens, et respectu eiusdem passi – posset indifferententer in utrumque oppositorum, quia voluntas potest velle et nolle idem codem modo praesentatum. Itaque necessarium est attribuire voluntati principaliter motionem sui ad ‘velle’, quia ipsa sola habet indifferentiam in agendo, proportionatam tali passo. Sed lignum non habet in agendo indifferentiam proportionatam sibi in ratione passi: est enim receptivum qualitatum disparatarum, et contrarium etiam, quorum aliqua intensa facta corrumpit ipsum; nec habet principia tot uninova, patet, quia etiam nihil univoce movet se, – nec unum principium univocum, quia quomodo esset ita illimitatum, nisi dicendo quidlibet posse in omnes qualitates susceptibiles in ipso, etiam corruptivas sui?"
qua non causes. The proportionality between active and passive powers also helps to distinguish *per se* causes from *sine qua non* causes. Like Henry, Scotus agrees that what distinguishes a *per se* cause from a *sine qua non* cause of an effect is the presence or absence of a relevant causal power. A *sine qua non* cause does not have the relevant causal powers to bring about the effect, although it might have the causal power to remove an impediment to the effect. But in contrast to Henry, Scotus tell us how we discover that a thing does not have suitable causal powers: we need to consider whether the purported *sine qua non* cause has the active and the passive powers that are proportionate to the other active or passive powers that are involved in the causal interaction.

7.2.3. Scotus on *Potentia* as a Division of Being

In contrast to Henry, Scotus understands principiation (and self-motion) not in terms of *supposita*, but in terms of forms alone. Thus, he is not so interested in explaining how a *suppositum* changes by receiving a form, something that the concept of subjective potency can explain. To Henry, Scotus would probably say that before one can explain the change that a *suppositum* undergoes by receiving a form, one must explain how that form comes about. This is one reason why Scotus’s explanation of self-motion does not appeal to potency as a division of being nor to the concept of subjective potency. In this section, I argue that there is another reason why Scotus cannot use potency as a division of being to explain the possibility of self-motion. This reason is that Scotus has a different way of grounding potency as a division of being, and with this, of understanding the concept of ‘subjective potency’. While Henry can appeal to the concept of power to explain what it means for something to be in subjective potency, Scotus cannot, for he does not ground subjective potency in power.

Potency as division of being, what is potential as opposed to what is actual, is one of the forms of real possibility, the possibility that is primarily relevant to metaphysics.\(^2\) Real or metaphysical

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potency can refer to three different kinds of potencies or possibilities, but all these possibilities share a common feature; they are related to being, and thus they are distinct from logical possibility, which is not about being. First, real potency can refer to that possible which is opposed to the impossible, that is, anything that contains a contradiction. Anything that does not contain a contradiction can exist, so in this sense possibility applies to any being: to created beings and even to God, but also to concepts, both simple and complex. In this general sense, potency refers to a kind of possibility, or more precisely to whatever is possible because it is metaphysically consistent.

Second, real potency can refer to possibility as opposed to necessity. An entity is necessary when there is no defect in it, that is, when there is nothing missing or unactualized in it, and so it cannot but exist in the way it does. Of course, only God is such a necessary being. All other things are only possible or contingent because given their defects and lacks, they could have been otherwise than they are or they even could have not been at all. This kind of possibility differs from the first because it excludes God from among the possible items.

Third, in the strictest sense of metaphysical or real possibility, something is possible or in potency as opposed to being in act. Something is in act if that thing actually exists; it is in potency.

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63 See Scotus, QSM IX, qq. 1–2, n. 21 (OPh 4: 515); Reportatio 1–A, d. 2, pars 3, q. 1, n. 135 (Wolter and Bychkov, 1: 156). To put it slightly differently, possibility is "convertible with being", that is, whatever has being is possible, and whatever is possible has being. On this point, one can further ask with what sense of being (as Scotus mentions them in Quodl., q. 3, n. 8, 93) possibility is convertible. On this problem see Ansgar Santogrossi, "Duns Scotus on Potency Opposed to Act in Questions on the Metaphysics, IX," American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly 67, no. 1 (1993): 58–59.

64 See King, "Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change," 247. This sense of possibility is the closest to logical possibility, but note that there is a difference between them: logical possibility does not have anything to do with being.

65 Other places where he discusses about the meaning of act and potency are Ord. I, d. 2 pars 2, qq. 1–2, n. 262 (Vat. 2: 282); Ord. I, d. 7, q. 1, nn. 27–29 (Vat. 4: 118–19); Ord. I, d. 20, q. un., nn. 11–12 (Vat. 5: 308–9); Lect. I, d. 7, q. un., n. 31 (Vat. 16: 483–84), and Lect. I, d. 20, q. un., n. 10 (Vat. 17: 285–86). For discussions on the meaning of act and potency see King, "Duns Scotus on Possibilities, Powers, and the Possible."); on the meaning of act and potency in QSM, book IX, see John Boler, "The Ontological Commitment of Scotus's Account of Potency in His Questions on the Metaphysics, Book IX," in John Duns Scotus: Metaphysics and Ethics, ed. Ludger Honnefelder, Rega Wood, and Mechthild Dreyer (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 145–160. On the foundation for what is possible and its ontological status see Tobias Hoffmann, Creatura Intellecta: Die Ideen und Possibilien bei Duns Scotus mit Ausblick auf Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Poincnet und Maastricht, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters n.F. 60 (Munster: Aschendorff, 2002), 173–214. My main problem with his presentation is that Hoffmann does not seem to consistently distinguish between the different kinds of possibilities, especially between what is possible as opposed to what is actual, and what is possible as opposed to what is impossible. These are two kinds of possibilities that, as we will see below, Peter Auriol insisted should be distinguished, while later Scotists, such as Mastrius, conflated them. Second, when Hoffmann explains the text from QSM IX, qq. 1–2 that I also discuss here, he says that Scotus did not definitively decide on which of the two possitions about the ontological status of possibility he maintains. (Ibid., 177.) In my view, Scotus defends the second position—in this section, I show what this position entails.
when it is not yet actualized. However, once it is actualized, it is no longer in potency. This is the sense of ‘possible’ on which Scotus focuses in QSM IX, qqs. 1–2 and the one that is mentioned in discussions of the possibility of self-motion. It is on this sense of possibility that I will focus in what follows.

In contrast to possibility in the previous two senses, the third kind of possibility is the only one that concerns something that either exists or happens in the natural world: it is the only sense that might be relevant for explaining change. Indeed, possibility in the third sense is characterized by being relatively opposed to act. Something is possible not only because it is not impossible or because it is not necessary, but also because while it is neither impossible nor necessary, it is not yet actual. Thus, the account of this kind of possibility contains an ordering to what exists in our world.67

What is possible in this third sense can be possible objectively and subjectively. To understand what this means and to show that for Scotus power does not ground subjective potency, we need to tackle the problem of what grounds this third kind of possibility. But first let us note that by saying that what is possible is really ordered to what is actual, Scotus puts some constraints on how one should address the problem of the grounding of what is possible (as opposed to what is actual). If possibility contains a reference to what is actual or, to put it more precisely, if possibility is ordered to what is actual, then any possible thing contains such a relation. But relations require the existence of their relata. If the foundation of a relation of possibility is something non-existent, then the relation is non-existent.68 Scotus discusses two possible answers to this question.

One answer bites the bullet: if what is possible is really ordered to what is actual, then it has some ontological status, and it is more than nothing. What are possible in this sense are the essences of things that will become actual—before a tree exists actually, its essence is possible and it has a relation to an actual instantiation of this essence. We can make true claims about this possible essence because it has a certain kind of being that distinguishes it from actual being and from nothing.69 This

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67 On the other hand, what is actual is not ordered to what is potential, as it can be seen in the case of God, who is supposed to actually exist, although there was no potentiality for Him. This means that the relation between act and potency is a non-mutual relation: it is only the account of ‘potency’ that includes an ordering to act. Because act and potency are (non-mutually) related, and because nothing can be at the same time in act and potency, act and potency are relatively opposed. See Scotus, QSM IX, qqs. 1–2, n. 23 (OPh 4: 516).

68 For Scotus raising this problem see Scotus, QSM IX, qqs. 1–2, n. 26 (OPh 4: 518).

69 Ibid., n. 27 (OPh 4: 518): “potentia metaphysica praecise sumpta, scilicet ut abstrahit ab omni potentia naturali, fundatur praecise in essentia, quae dicitur possibilis esse, et est ordo illius essentiae ad esse tamquam ad terminum, sicut in essentia animae Antichristi fundatur potentia ad suum esse. Ista autem potentia quae est inter duo, utrumque illorum potest denominare: unum ut quasi subiectum, alius ut quasi terminum. Quemadmodum dictum est in VII quod aliter est haec vera ‘materia generatur’, et aliter haec ‘compositum generatur’, quia prima ut ‘forma’ denominat subiectum, secunda ut
view faces an obvious problem for it needs to assign possible essences a dubious ontological status: their being is neither actual nor nothing. However, despite this problem, this answer seems to get things right. Questions about ontological status are usually pursued because of other concerns—it is strange to postulate items with ontological status without any necessity. Thus, it is more plausible to think that when some philosophers give an ontological status to what is possible (as opposed to what is actual), they do so because they think that they are addressing an important aspect of the question of what makes claims about this third kind of possibility true. One aspect that might motivate them is the issue of how these claims can be objective or mind-independent. This is especially an issue for medieval philosophers, given that claims about this possibility (which is opposed to what is actual) are at the core of Aristotelian metaphysics and physics. Thus, it is natural for them to ask: do claims about possibilities refer to something real and mind-independent? And if yes, to what do they refer?

The other answer tries to avoid postulating beings with spiffy existence, but then has problems in explaining what grounds what is possible, especially how claims about what is possible are mind-

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"via" denominat terminum. Sic in proposito. Et fundamentum est possibile potentia fundata in ipso; et terminus est possibilis eadem potentia, quia eadem est ad ipsum terminum." See also Scotus, QSM IX, qq. 1–2, n. 33 (OPh 4: 520–21); "potentiae activae cui cumque necessae videtur ponere aliquid possibile correspondere; quia respectu eius quod non est in se possibile, nulla est potentia activa. Deus autem est creativus antequam creet, ergo creabile est possibile creari, non tantum potentia logica, quia illa quantum est de se posset esse sine activa. […] Propter hoc ergo ponitur potentia illa metaphysica in essentia possibili — aliqua entitas qualis non est in chimaera. Sed de fundamento eius, qualem entitatem habet antequam existat, difficultas est magna, nec hic pertractanda; forte videtur diffusius et prolixius principali." The view that grounds what is possible (as opposed to what is actual) in the possibility of an essence is probably Henry’s view about the possibility of things to be created. Since I have not discussed this view, a discussion that would have taken us further away from the aim of this chapter, I will not tackle here the issue whether this is an appropriate attribution or an adequate description of Henry’s view. For Henry’s view see Porro, “Possibilità ed esse essentiae in Enrico de Gand.”

70 Recall that what is possible in this sense is ordered to what is actual. Thus, this answer still has difficulties to explain how the relations founded upon these possible essences with a dubious existence are real. To address this issue, Scotus suggests that the relation is real because although it is grasped by an intellect when analyzing how possible essences are related to their actual instantiations, it is not created by our intellect any more than the relation between yesterday and today is created by our intellect. Thus, Scotus compares the relation between what is possible and what is actual to the relation between past and present: this temporal relation is not a creation of our mind, although it exists only when we think about it. However, how this relation is real also remains mysterious. See Scotus, QSM IX, qq. 1–2, n. 34 (OPh 4: 521).

71 The discussion of the issues of objectivity and existence is based on Fabrizio Mondadori and Adam Morton, “Modal Realism: The Poisoned Pawn,” Philosophical Review 85, no. 1 (1976): esp. 5–8, where he discusses the temptation to conflate the two issues. My interpretation of Scotus’s second answer also uses insights from contemporary studies about truthmakers for modal propositions. On other aspects that I touch upon in these paragraphs, especially on how possibilities can be grounded in what is actual, to understand the problem I have used Armstrong, A World of States of Affairs, 148–74; D.M. Armstrong, Truth and Truthmakers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 83–94; Ross Paul Cameron, “Truthmakers and Modality,” Synthese 164, no. 2 (2008): 261–80. Some might be inclined to think that modal propositions do not need truthmakers because, for example, necessary true propositions do not need anything to make them true—they are already true. Against this view, see Ibíd., 262–64. Note that in his analysis of Scotus’s view in QSM, Boler proposes that Scotus is concerned with the grounding for propositions about modalities. However, he seems to identify having a grounding with the question about the ontological status of the possible. This might explain why he does not submit the second view to any analysis.
independent. The answer takes the minimalist position about the ontological status of what is possible as opposed to what is actual: before it is actualized, a possible being is “simply non-being” and the relation to what is actual, a relation that pertains to the account of the third kind of possibility is not a real relation, but one of reason. This answer has several advantages. It gets rid of the strange way in which an essence is while possible. Furthermore, it solves the problem of how we are to think about the relation contained in the account of what is possible—this relation to what is actual is a relation of reason. Scotus thinks that this second answer is more plausible. But there seems to be little prospect that this answer can provide us with a ground for what is possible—the possible is non-being. Indeed, in recent scholarship, John Boler has suggested that if we agree that in QSM Scotus is searching for a ground for what is possible, then the first answer can provide such a ground, while the second does not. In Boler’s interpretation, the second answer posits that possibilities are just “free floating ‘privations’ with no subject.” Add to this that according to this second answer, claims about what is possible in the third sense seem to be mind-dependent for the relation between what is possible and what is actual is a relation of reason.

In my view, this assessment of the second answer is inaccurate for even the second answer posits a ground for what is possible. I suggest that at the core of the second answer, there is the intuition that what makes claims about what is possible true are not some strangely existing entities, but something actual. But although what makes these claims true is something actual, the possible is not actual and it does not exist. What are the pros and cons of the second answer understood in this way? The advantage of grounding what is possible in what is actual is that it gets rid of all the worries about the ontological status of what is possible (what is possible is non-being), while at the same time it allows us to make true claims about what is possible. Compare this with the first answer, which

72 See Scotus, QSM IX, qq. 1–2, n. 35 (OPh 4: 522): “Aliter dicitur quod ens in potentia simpliciter est non-ens, et per consequens relatio fundata in ipso est tantum rationis.”
73 Ibid., n. 36 (OPh 4: 523): “Videtur haec via secunda probabilis, et maxime si ponant essentiam et esse non differre nisi ratione. Tunc enim videtur necessario concedendum quod potentia essentiae, ut fundamentui, ad esse, ut ad terminum, non sit nisi relatio rationis, quia non est inter distincta nisi ratione tantum, sicut identitas.” Hoffmann takes this to mean that Scotus does not definitively endorse this second reply. (Hoffmann, Creatura Intellecta, 177.)
74 See Boler, “The Ontological Commitment of Scotus’s Account of Potency in His Questions on the Metaphysics, Book IX,” 147–53, esp. 153. Peter King, on the other hand, remarks that if possibilities are just non-beings, “free floating ‘privations’” and without a ground, then this view, left unexplained, cannot account for how a certain possible being is different from another possible being. See King, “Duns Scotus on Possibilities, Powers, and the Possible,” 198. Without addressing Peter King’s worry, Richard Cross follows Boler on the issue of possibilities being privations with no subject, but he never explains how Scotus’s view is supposed to work; see Richard Cross, “Duns Scotus on Essence and Existence,” Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy 1 (2013): 193–94.
comes with huge ontological costs: we need to postulate that essences somehow exist, while maintaining that their existence is not like anything that we are familiar with. The disadvantage of understanding the second answer in this way is that it does not have an obvious solution to the objectivity issue for, as Aquinas puts it, one cannot scientifically know what does not exist. But this does not mean that there is no hope to solve this issue. So for Scotus’s second answer to be a cogent, it needs to solve the problem of objectivity.

Prima facie the suggestion that Scotus’s second answer grounds what is possible in what is actual is plausible. On the one hand, if we agree that there must be a ground for claims about what is possible, (and Scotus must think so), then these claims cannot be grounded in non-being. Thus, they must be grounded in something actual. On the other hand, this suggestion is even more plausible if we think about the meaning of ‘possible’ that is at stake. Scotus deals with a certain sense of ‘possible’, what is possible as opposed to what is actual—the discussion is not about what is possible as opposed to what is impossible or to what is necessary. So singling out what is actual as the ground of this kind of possibility is not far-fetched at all.

But what is the actual that can ground claims about possibility? According to one interpretation, the actual that grounds claims about possibilities is a power, either divine or created. For example, what makes a tree possible in this sense is that it can be produced by God or it can be brought about by a power, by an agent through generation: what is possible exists only as something that can be brought about. This alternative seems to be the perfect candidate for being Scotus’s view. Moreover, there is an author who agrees with Scotus on the ontological status of what is possible, and also maintains that possibility is grounded in power. Godfrey of Fontaines agrees that a thing to be created or to become actual has real being, but he emphasizes that this real being is in potency, that is, it has being “in its efficient cause and in formal exemplar.” Like Scotus, Godfrey does not attribute to a possible thing any kind of spiffy existence: for something to be possible it is sufficient that there be a cause that can bring it about or a mind that can cognize it. Thus, what is possible exists


76 See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VIII, q. 3 (PhB 4: 38): “Si ergo quæratur utrum natura rationalis, antequam existeret, haberet aliquid esse realis aliud ab ipso esse cognito, est dicendum quod non nisi in potenti, hoc est in sua causa effectiva et formali exemplari in qua eius esse cognitum formaliter continetur ab aeterno et eius esse reale in virtute.”
virtually in God, as something that can be brought about by God. Add to this that there are also later authors who attribute to Scotus a similar view based on how he uses the term ‘objective potency’. These authors explain that Scotus understands objective being as being in potency, namely as the object or *terminus* of a power (for example, the divine power). To say that a tree is in objective being is to say that there is a power that can bring it about.

My first objection to this interpretation that suggests that what is possible is grounded in divine power is that in discussing the second answer in *QS*M book IX, qqs. 1–2, Scotus does not refer to God at all. Moreover, when he discusses later in *QS*M the meaning of objective potency from the perspective of the second answer, he also does not mention powers, divine or created ones. To this it can be added that if Scotus grounds what is possible in God’s power, then he is not able to differentiate between grounds for claims about what is possible as opposed to what is actual and grounds for claims about mere possibilities, that is, possibilities that will never get instantiated. Indeed, what exists as

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77 See F. Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. 31, sec. 3, pars. 2 (Vivès 25: 233): “Scotus enim numquam intellexit potentiam pure obiectivam esse aliquid reale positivum distinctum a causa producente et praesuppositum ad actionem eius ex parte rei possibilis. Imo, si attempes legatur, aperte id negat dicta dist. 12, solum ergo vocavit ens in potentia obiectiva ipsum ens possibile quia se habet ut objectum potentiae productive.” See Mastrius, *Disputationes in XII Aristotelis Stagiritae libros metaphysicorum*, disp. 6, q. 2, n. 69 in Bartholomaeus Mastrius, *Disputationes in XII Aristotelis Stagiritae Libros Metaphysicorum* (Venice: Apud Nicolaum Pezzana, 1647), 245b.: “Ratio itaque sumenda est ex dicendi infra disp. cit. 8, q. 1. art. 3, ubi num. 30 et inde ostendo quod licet res ab aeterno dicantur intrisece possibles ex scipsis et principiative ab intellectu divino loquendo de possibilitate logica, objective tamen dicuntur extrinsecse possibiles a divina omnipotentia. Siquidem rem esse in potentia obiectiva est obici virtuti alicuius, agentis nam producere valentis, unde res dicitur obiective possibilis prae terminos extrinsecem sumpta a potentia activa.” But note the criticism of Peter Auriol, who argues that to say that something is in objective potency is not to say that the same thing is in a power objectively. The difference lies in the ontological commitments of the two expressions. When something is said to be an object of the divine power, what is said is that God can bring about that object—one is only committed to the existence of God. However, when something is said to in objective potency, what is said is that a certain object is possible to be brought about—so one is committed to the existence of an object about which something is said. See Peter Auriol, *Commentarium in primium librum Sententiarum pars prima*, d. 42, art. 3 in Peter Auriol, *Commentaria in primium librum Sententiarum pars prima* (Rome: Ex Typographia Vaticana, 1596), fol. 973b.: “Non est enim verum quod idem sit dicit, mundum fuisse in potentia obiective et in potentia obiectiva, tum quia cum dicitur obiective in potentia, ita potentia se tenet ex parte Dei, et est activa; cum vero dicitur in potentia obiectiva, illa potentia se tenet ex parte objecti, quasi in mundo sit alius potens. Et primum quidem est verum; secundum autem falsum et incompossible etiam per intellectu.”

78 This is the point that Peter Auriol makes. Ibid., fol. 974a: “Certum quidem est quod intellectus attribuit Deo relationem possibilitatis, cooppositam potentiae Dei activae, secundum quam denominatur, ut objectum possibile, et terminus possibilitis et ut quoddam possibile obiective; non tamen haec possibilitas est respectu, quem exprimit potentia obiectiva, quod apparex ex terminis. Nam potentia obiectiva habet pro termino actum secundum istos. […] Illa vero possibilitas quam concepist mens circa mundum non habet pro termino aliud quam cooppostam relationem, intellectum ex parte Dei, videlicet potentiam activam. Et item ista relatio non dicitur potentia proprie, sed quaedam possibilitias. Potentia namque refertur ad actum et dicitur in ordine ad actum. […] Possibilitas autem qua mundus dicitur possibilis pro eo, quod Deus potest, non dicitur in ordine ad actum, unde non est potentia sed productibilitas quaedam; unde nil aliud est mundum esse possibile quam mundum esse productibile; producibilias autem non est relatio coopposita actu, sed coopposita potentiae productivae.” Auriol argues that Scotus himself must be committed to the distinction between something being in objective potency and the same thing being in a power objectively, for he must understand being in objective potency as opposed to being actual. But to be objectively in God’s power or to be an object of God’s power is not opposed to what is actual; this is so because in this last case possibility is defined in relation to God’s productive power—being possible
objects of God’s power are not only those possibilities that will be instantiated at some point, but also mere possibilities that God could have made actual, but chose not to.

My second objection to this interpretation is based on what seems to be Scotus’s main concern immediately after presenting the second answer in QSM. If Scotus were to espouse this interpretation, then he would not be concerned with the problem of the objectivity of the claims about what is possible. Since God’s power does not depend on our intellect at all, this power is an objective ground for the truth of the claims about what is possible. But in QSM, after introducing the second answer, Scotus wrestles with the problem of how claims about what is possible are real and objective, not mind-dependent. Since he has just stated that what is possible is non-being and that the relation to what is possible is a relation of reason, Scotus immediately discusses how the non-being of what is possible is not a pure nothing as a chimera is. In this context, he compares possibilities with privations: both refer to non-being and both involve negations of certain features that things can have. The reason for discussing this issue is precisely that he wants to solve an obvious problem related to the second answer: if what is possible is a non-being, and if claims about what is possible are grounded in the actual things themselves, how can claims about what is possible pertain to metaphysics?

I propose another interpretation for what Scotus takes to be the ground of what is possible (as opposed to what is actual): what makes true the claim that a certain tree exists is also what makes true the claim that the same tree is in potency, namely that actual tree. The only difference is that in the latter case we start from the actual tree from which we remove or negate actual existence. This is a puzzling interpretation for which I do not have conclusive textual evidence in Scotus’s work. However, this interpretation makes better sense of Scotus’s important discussion about privations and possibilities from QSM IX, qq. 1–2. But first, let us see the text:

means being producible. But many things are producible by God, although God never produces them. Thus, being producible is not opposed to being actual, and, therefore, neither is being objectively in God’s power. I agree with this understanding of Scotus’s objective potency proposed by Peter Auriol: things in objective being are things that are not yet actual, but will be actual at some point.

79 See Scotus, QSM IX, qq. 1–2, n. 35 (OPh 4: 522); “Et divisio entis per ‘ens in actu’ et ‘ens in potentia’ est quasi divisio per contradictionem. Non simpliciter, quia tune ‘ens in potentia’ converteretur cum non-ente et diceretur de impossibili. Sed sicut privatio non plus entitatis dicit quam quod, licet sit negatio contracta ad subiectum, et ideo divisio per habitum et privationem est per contradictionem quandam, sic in proposito ‘ens in potentia’ nihil formaliter dicit nisi non-ens quoddam, cui scilicet potest succedere ens. Et intelligitur quasi idem ens sibi succedere, quasi primo fundetur potentiam, deinque sit terminus potentiae, quod non est nisi secundum intellectum conceptum idem. Nam quando nihil est in re, non est idem nec alius quae istae sunt differentiae entis. Sic ergo differentia entis in quantum intelligitur, determinat sibi pro fundamento essentiam intellectum, quae eadem postea erit; non-entitas autem nec in re nec in intellectu aliquid subjectum determinat. Et pro tanto videtur ens in potentia magis ens quam negatio entis, sicut privatio videtur magis ens quam negatio. Unde privatio potius terminus motus naturalis, negatio non. Sic enti in potentia intelligitur succedere ens; non sic non-enti absolute.” See also [Text 9].
The division of being into ‘being-in-act’ and ‘being-in-potency’ is a kind of division into contradictories, not speaking simply, for then ‘being-in-potency’ would be coextensive with non-being and would be said of the ‘impossible’, but rather as privation does not express more entity than does a negation, although it is a negation contracted to a subject (and hence, the division into ‘possession’ and ‘privation’ is by way of a kind of contradiction). Similarly, in this case, ‘being-in-potency’ does not formally express anything more than a sort of non-being, namely, that upon which a being can follow. And it is understood that the being that follows is as if [quasi] the same being, [namely] insofar as [this being] is first the foundation for the potency and then is the terminus of the potency. But it is ‘the same’ only because the intellect conceives it to be the same.  

Privations such as blindness are opposed to what is actual not because they simply contradict it, but because they are negations of it. The reason why privations are not simply contradictions of being is that contradictions are between being and non-being, while privations require a subject, something that already exists. Like privations, possibilities do not simply contradict what actually exists. The possibility of a goat is not simply the contradiction of the actual goat, while the non-being of the chimera is the contradiction of being. But do possibilities have a subject as privations do? Recall that Boler considered possibilities privations without subjects. [Text 9] does not necessarily support this reading. It just draws a parallelism between privations and possibilities: as privations are not contradictories of being, neither are possibilities. Since privations are not contradictories, for they are contracted to a subject, so, preserving the parallelism, possibilities would not be contradictories, for they would also be contracted to a subject. But what would be the subject to which the possibilities are contracted? [Text 9] hints that they are contracted to an essence, the same essence that later exists—this future essence must be that in which the potency is founded.

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81 Antonius Andrea explains in more detail how privations differ from contradictions. See Antonius Andreas, *Metaphysicae Textualis*, lib. X, pars 3, cap. 3, n. 34 in Antonius Andreas, “Expositio in XII Libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis (Metaphysica Textualis),” in Joannis Duns Scorti Opera Omnia, vol. 6 (Paris: Ludovicum Vivès, 1892), 394b: “ex praedictis patet quod privatio est quaedam contradictio nam aliquid dicitur privatum ex hoc quod non habet; privatio tamen non est contradictio simpliciter et absolute sed contradictio quaedam. Cuius ratio est quia contradictio quantum est de se, verificatur tam de ente quam de non ente; vere etiam dicitur quod non est non videt, et quod lapis non videt, et ideo contradictio, quantum est de se, non requirit existentiam subjecti apti. Privatio autem necessario requirit subjectum vel simpliciter vel subjectum aptum, et ideo non est non potest dici caecum.”

82 Hoffmann briefly remarks that the foundation of the relation to what is actual is a not yet actual essence: “Das Fundament der Relation ist die (noch-nicht-seienden) Wesenheit, nicht aber eine Nichteitität (*non entitas*) als solche.”
The view that a potency is founded in a future essence is more clearly expressed when Scotus discusses objective and subjective potency (the two divisions of the potency, that is opposed to what is actual). The objective potency of a thing is founded in the future essence of that thing and is a potency for its proper being (esse). Such potency is of either accidents or substances. For example, the objective potency of whiteness is founded in the future essence of whiteness and is for its being, while that of a substance should be founded in its future essence and be for its being. This is simply a potency for the proper existence of a thing.

While any essence that will be instantiated is in objective potency, only some of these essences are also in subjective potency. Something is in subjective potency when “it can receive some being from something,” that is, when it can be in a certain way. For example, a white wall is in subjective potency.

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Hoffmann, *Creatura Intellecta*, 181. My worry with this claim, which Hoffmann does not explain in more detail, is that the ontological status of such a not-yet-actual essence is not clear, and one might understand it to have something akin to intentional being, precisely what Scotus denies it has.

83 The distinction between the two kinds of potency, and especially the nature of objective potency, was a subject of controversy among medieval philosophers. See Mastrius, *Disputationes in XII Aristotelis Stagiritae libris Metaphysicorum*, disp. 6, q. 2, n. 63, fol. 244a: “Circa hanc divisionem potentiae in subjectivam et objectivam, acerrima fuit semper altercatio ad haec usque tempora inter Thomistas et Scotistas. […] Inficientur Thomistae hanc divisionem potentiae nulla aliarm agnoscentes potentiam praeter activam et passivam, et potentiam objectivam praecepue condemnant ut merum Scoti figmentum. […] Aureolus quoque I, d. 42, p. 1, art. 3, ex professo hanc potentiam objectivam impugnatet et inquit hanc potentiam objectivam nihil esse dixit.”

84 See Scotus, *QSM IX*, q. 1–2, n. 41 (OPh 4: 524–25): “Prima est quippe in albedine futura fundata ad proprium esse. Ita enim essentia accidentis vel albedinis est in potentia ad proprium esse suum.” Note that Scotus does not say ‘future’, for the use of this term see the next note.

85 Ibid., n. 43 (OPh: 525): “Alla quippe est potentia in albedine futura fundata ad proprium esse suum.”

86 Some later Scotists, who maintain the first interpretation (that is, that God's divine power grounds the possible that is opposed to what is actual), mention two conditions for something to be in objective potency: (1) it should not yet actually exist, and (2) it should not be such that it cannot actually exist. (See Mastrius, *Disputationes in XII Aristotelis Stagiritae libris Metaphysicorum*, disp. 6, q. 2, n. 65, fol. 244b: “Scotistae passim duas pariter requirunt conditiones, ut aliquid dicatur esse in potentia objectiva. Prima est ut illud quod dicatur esse in potentia objectiva non habeat in rerum natura esse actualis existentiae. […] Altera est quod est non sit tamen illi esse non repugnet per quam conditionem excluduntur entia rationis et fictitia, quibus repugnat esse in rerum natura.”) However, these conditions are insufficient, for they allow for some things to be in objective potency that could have been created by God but were not. So, these possibilities, because they never become actual, cannot be opposed to what actually is. To restrict the sense of possibility to the possibility that is opposed to what is actual, Scotus mentions the ‘future essence’ as the ground for what is possible. Thus, in my interpretation, a third condition needs to be added, namely that something is in objective potency because (3) it will be actual at some point in the future. This third condition was noticed by Peter Auriol. See the text from Peter Auriol, *Commentarium in primum librum Sententiarum pars prima*, d. 42, art. 3, fol. 974a mentioned in note 78. Note that Peter Auriol understands objective potency in the sense I proposed: things in objective being are things that are not yet actual, but will be actual at some point.

87 See Scotus, *QSM IX*, q. 1–2, n. 42 (OPh 4: 525): “Secunda non est ciusulibet entis, quia non est nisi illius quod, praeter esse proprium, natur est recipere aliquod esse ab alio; et ita quando non habet illud, est in potentia ad illud. Verbia gratia, corpus non-album est in potentia ut sit, non simpliciter sed ut sit album, quod est esse eius secundum quid et extrinsecum.” Compare this with the texts from the *Lectura* mentioned in the next note.
to be blue because it can be in a certain way, namely, blue.\footnote{Note that later Scotists explain this potency differently: subjective potency “is that potency according to which something else is in receptive potency to take on a form.” See B. Mastrius, \textit{Disputationes in XII Aristotelis Stagiritae libros Metaphysicorum, disp. VI, q. 2, n. 64, fol. 244b: “Primo, ut a potentia subiectiva, de qua minor est difficilias, exordium sumamus, ipsa est secundum quam aliud est in potentia receptiva ad aliquam formam suscipientem, sive substantalem, sive accidentalem, unde ens in potentia dicitur omne illud quod potest recipere aliquem actum substantive vel accidentalem.” Probably they base this understanding on Scotus’s early \textit{Lett. II, d. 12, q. un}, where he says that a thing is in subjective potency because it is in potency to something (\textit{aliud}), and they interpret this something as being the form. See Scotus, \textit{Lett. II, d. 12, q. un., n. 30} (Vat. 19: 80): “Nam aliquid dicitur esse in potentia dupliciter: uno modo, quia est terminus potentiae, sive ad quod est potentia, et istud dicitur esse in potentia objective (sicut Antichristus modo dicitur esse in potentia, et similiter albedo generanda); alio modo, dicitur aliquid esse in potentia ut subiectum potentiae sive in quod est potentia, et sic dicitur aliquid esse in potentia subjunctive, quia est in potentia ad aliud, quod tamen nondenud perfectur (ut superficies dealbanda).” Note that the view in the \textit{Lectura} is different from the one in \textit{QSM}. In the \textit{Lectura}, Scotus seems to understand the ontological status of the possible in a more realist way (he suggests that what is possible has a diminished being—thus, he seems to uphold the first alternative). He also considers that what is in potency is in potency to its actual essence, and not actual being. See Scotus, \textit{Lett. I, d. 20, q. un., n. 10} (OPh. 17: 285): “Nam uno modo dicitur ‘potentia realis’ potentia quae est differentia entis dividens ens contra actum: et sic est potentia cuislibet rei in genere, nam quolibet res primo est in potentia et post in actu, sicut idem primo est ens diminutum et post ens perfectum.”}}

Scotus says more about the nature of subjective potency, when he compares it with objective potency. He remarks that neither objective nor subjective potency remains with the act, that is, things in subjective and objective potency are possible only as long as they are not actual. For example, while Scotus thinks that matter is in subjective potency, he does not say that matter as it is in subjective potency persists with the act.\footnote{In \textit{Lett. II, d. 12, q. un.}, Scotus explains that the only way in which matter can be a principle and be said to be in potency if matter is in subjective potency. Matter cannot be in objective potency, while it is a principle because that would mean that it does not exist. See Scotus, \textit{Lett. II, d. 12, q. un., nn. 30–37} (Vat. 19: 80–2). But note that this does not mean that the subjective potency of matter is a principle. I argued before that Henry would also take subjective potency not to be a principle.} This also means that Scotus will not agree with Alnwick’s point that the subjective potency of matter (or any other subjective potency) is a principle.\footnote{Scotus also draws attention to the importance of subjective potency for the definition of motion. Something is in potency to motion in two ways. A thing is in potency to the end \textit{terminus} of a motion: for example, Socrates is in potency to being in the market. But a thing is also in potency to the process of moving to attain the \textit{terminus} of a motion; for example, Socrates is in potency to moving so that he gets to the market. See Scotus, \textit{QSM}, IX, q. 1–2, n. 58 (OPh 4: 530–31): “Quintum est quod subiectiva est illa quae ponitur in definitione motus, non quae est ad motum, sed quae est ad terminum eius. Nam ante motum est potentia ad motum, et illa evacuatur cum mobile inceptit moveri, sicut videlicet nata est evacuari, non tota simul sed successive; et respectu huius potentiae motus est actu. Sed cum illo actu stat potentia ad terminum, vel alia a priori, vel eadem differens secundum completum in termino et incompletum, secundum illos qui ponunt talem differentiam inter motum et terminum.” The contrast between the two potencies is that while the first one is simultaneous, the second one is successive. This means that while Socrates’s potency to be in the market is actualized as soon as he arrives in the market, his potency for moving to the market is slowly drained away as he moves towards the market. Both potencies are subjective because in both there is a subject that can get to be in a certain way.} Thus, both objective and subjective potency are forms of being in potency (as opposed to being actual). Moreover, both

88 Note that later Scotists explain this potency differently: subjective potency “is that potency according to which something else is in receptive potency to take on a form.” See B. Mastrius, \textit{Disputationes in XII Aristotelis Stagiritae libros Metaphysicorum, disp. VI, q. 2, n. 64, fol. 244b: “Primo, ut a potentia subiectiva, de qua minor est difficilias, exordium sumamus, ipsa est secundum quam aliud est in potentia receptiva ad aliquam formam suscipientem, sive substantalem, sive accidentalem, unde ens in potentia dicitur omne illud quod potest recipere aliquem actum substantive vel accidentale.” Probably they base this understanding on Scotus’s early \textit{Lett. II, d. 12, q. un}, where he says that a thing is in subjective potency because it is in potency to something (\textit{aliud}), and they interpret this something as being the form. See Scotus, \textit{Lett. II, d. 12, q. un., n. 30} (Vat. 19: 80): “Nam aliquid dicitur esse in potentia dupliciter: uno modo, quia est terminus potentiae, sive ad quod est potentia, et istud dicitur esse in potentia objective (sicut Antichristus modo dicitur esse in potentia, et similiter albedo generanda); alio modo, dicitur aliquid esse in potentia ut subiectum potentiae sive in quod est potentia, et sic dicitur aliquid esse in potentia subjunctive, quia est in potentia ad aliud, quod tamen nondenud perfectur (ut superficies dealbanda).” Note that the view in the \textit{Lectura} is different from the one in \textit{QSM}. In the \textit{Lectura}, Scotus seems to understand the ontological status of the possible in a more realist way (he suggests that what is possible has a diminished being—thus, he seems to uphold the first alternative). He also considers that what is in potency is in potency to its actual essence, and not actual being. See Scotus, \textit{Lett. I, d. 20, q. un., n. 10} (OPh. 17: 285): “Nam uno modo dicitur ‘potentia realis’ potentia quae est differentia entis dividens ens contra actum: et sic est potentia cuislibet rei in genere, nam quolibet res primo est in potentia et post in actu, sicut idem primo est ens diminutum et post ens perfectum.”}}
are potencies for being. Objective potency is for ‘essential’ being: something is in potency to exist—for example, an apple is in objective potency to exist; subjective potency is for accidental being: something is in potency to exist in a certain way—for example, the same apple is in subjective potency to being red.

Subjective potency is founded in an (actual) essence which is such that it can receive being in some way from another thing. Since it refers to ‘receiving’, one might be tempted to say that subjective potency is grounded in something having a passive power to receive a form. But, as I pointed out, in *QSM* IX, qq. 1–2, Scotus does not say that something in subjective potency receives a form; he talks about receiving being or existence. So it does not make sense to say that for something to be in subjective potency, that thing needs to have a power for receiving being, especially given that this being is not even proper being—Scotus says that this being is accidental and extrinsic (*secundum quid et extrinsecum*) being. Moreover, if one accepts that an essence in subjective being has a power for being in a certain way, one also needs to accept that an essence in objective being has a power for simply being. But this would make being or existence something, that is, an entity, to be received.

This understanding of what grounds being in subjective potency is very different from Henry’s understanding of the same issue. Recall that in [Text 6], Henry says that something is in subjective potency “insofar as it is the subject from which something is produced.” That is, for Henry, to be in subjective potency something needs to exist and be such that it can play a causal role, for example, as a constituent in what is produced. To play this role of a constituent of the final product of a causal interaction, however, the thing in subjective potency needs to have a power: it needs to be able to receive a form, for only, when it receives the form, the thing becomes a constituent of the final product. For Scotus, to be in subjective potency, something needs to exist and be such that it can receive not a form, but *being*—the potency is a potency for *being* in a certain way. For Henry, subjective potency must be grounded in a passive power, for only a thing with a power can receive a form and become a constituent of something else; for Scotus, on the other hand, the potency is not grounded in any power, for no thing has a power to just receive being or existence.

Let us return to the issue of how claims about subjective and objective possibilities can be objective, that is, mind-independent. To address this issue, we need to look into how claims about

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91 This temptation is especially obvious for those Scotists who claim that something in subjective potency has a potency to receive a form, for what would that potency be other than a power? See note 88 above.
privations are objective: as we have seen, for Scotus, privations share important similarities with this kind of possibility that is opposed to what is actual. In fact, one the most important feature that they have in common is that both possibilities and privations are distinct from what is actual as forms of negations of it. Scotus’s solution to the issue of how claims about privations and possibilities are objective lies in how he envisages the nature of this negation. Negations are of two kinds. One negation is outside the genus and it is only conceptual. Through it, the whole being is negated. For example, whatever is impossible is a negation of being. But since only what is a being is real, then what is impossible is only logical, not real. Another kind of negation is inside a genus and is real. What is negated is not a product of our intellect, a being of reason, for in making the negation, the intellect follows how things are. An example of the second kind is the sentence ‘Socrates is not a donkey’. Since, according to his nature, Socrates is a man, he is, according to his nature, not a donkey. In the case of claims about privations and possibilities, the negation is of the second kind. Recall that a privation is contracted to a subject, to something that exists. Possibilities are contracted to an essence from which something is negated, either its actual existence or some accidental existence. This negation is not of the first kind because the negation applies to a being in certain genus: the possible that is at issue here is the one that comes before what is actual, and what is actual is always in a certain genus, so the possible will also be in a genus too. When one says that a tree was possible before it was actual, that claim is made true by the actual tree from which actual existence is removed.

See Scotus, Reportatio I-A, d. 23, q. un., n. 23 (Wolter and Bychkov, 1: 21): “Ad primum de negatione dico quod duplex est negatio: quaedam extra genus, quae negat omne ens, et talis est tantum rationis; quaedam est in genere, distinctam tamen a privatione, et haec dicit diversitate cuiuslibet rei ab omni non-tali, et non est ens rationis, sed inest ex natura rei. Sicut enim homo ex natura sua est homo, sic ex natura sua non est asinus; et talis negatio prima motione movet intellectum.” When Scotus says that the second kind of negation is different from privation, he does not mean to exclude privations from being real. He only means that this second kind of negation is not necessarily a privation, because privations are a form of negation. On the issue of real negations in medieval and early modern philosophy see Hübner, “Die Logik der Negation als ontologisches Erkenntnismittel”; Jacob Schmutz, “Réalistes, nihilistes et incompatibilistes: Le débat sur les ‘Negative Truthmakers’ dans la scolastique jésuite espagnole,” in Dire le néant, ed. Jérôme Laurent (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2007), 131–78.

One objection to my interpretation is that it requires existence to be a property that can be stripped away from an actual essence. Richard Cross has recently argued that for Scotus existence seems to be indeed a kind of property. See Cross, “Duns Scotus on Essence and Existence.” Cross draws attention to the fact that Scotus explains that existence is that by which something exists, and so, given that a property is that by which something is in a certain way, actual existence must be considered a kind of property. See Scotus, Ord. III, d. 6, q. 1, n. 36 (Vat. 9: 242–43): “ideo enim exsistentia pedis mei non est existentia mei licet sit in me, quia ego non sum pes neque subsistens respectu pedis sicut suppositum respectu naturae, sed eonverso magis pes existit per existentiam mei; et ideo existentia pedis non est alia ab illa qua existio, sed tantum est aliqua existentia partialis in illa qua existio.” Moreover, as a kind of property, actual existence is “in a certain way accidentally distinct” from the individual essence; for example, actual existence is in a certain way accidentally distinct from the individual essence of Socrates. See Scotus, Ord. II, d. 3, pars 1, q. 3, n. 65 (Vat. 7: 420). Scotus’s language of “in a certain way accidentally distinct although not really accidental” suggests that actual existence is somehow distinct from the individual essence without being an accident of it, although it does not necessarily suggest that actual existence is
If this interpretation is correct, then, although for Scotus, what is possible is non-being, possibilities are not “free-floating ‘privations’ with no subject” as Boler thinks that they are. What is possible is grounded in what is actual, which works as a kind of subject for it. Starting from what exists and by negating actual existence, we get to what is possible. This negation, however, is not purely conceptual, but follows how things are. Given this interpretation, Scotus’s position about possibility as being a kind of non-being can answer why we can make objective claims about what is possible without falling in the trap of reifying what is possible. What is possible remains a kind of non-being; moreover, the relation between what is actual and what is possible also remains a relation of reason, but this does not mean that claims about what is possible are claims about beings of reason, that is, claims pertaining to logic, for they are grounded in what is actual. If this is the view of Scotus, then Boler is right to think that Scotus is interested in the problem of grounding when he presents the two views. However, he is wrong when he says that the second answer does not posit any grounding for what is possible. In my interpretation, the second position grounds what is possible in what is actual, in the things themselves. Moreover, my interpretation is consistent with what is considered an important lesson of the second answer, namely that “questions about ontological standing […] only apply to actual existents.”

This discussion about what grounds subjective and objective potency or about what grounds that kind of possibility that is opposed to what is actual throws light on why Scotus does not explain self-motion in terms of potency as a division of being. Henry offers such a solution when he says that a self-mover has an active power to move itself and is in (subjective) potency to this motion. Note that for him potency as a division of being is grounded in power: something is in (subjective) potency because it has a power such that it can unite with a form and become part of a composite. In my interpretation, Scotus does not ground potency as a division of being in having a power, more precisely, something is in subjective potency because it can be in a certain way, not because it has power to receive a form. Thus, if Scotus were to appeal to the concept of subjective potency for explaining self-motion, he would have offered not an explanation of the possibility of self-motion, but a description of it: A self-mover is in act because it has an equivocal active principle for a form, while it is in subjective potency to the being of that form. For Henry, the term ‘subjective potency’ is like

\textit{somewhat} that can be added. But for my interpretation, the precise nature of existence as a property is not relevant. What is important is that actual existence, although not intrinsically included in the essence of things, is a kind of property that, although it is not an accident, can be removed because it is somehow distinguishable from an individual essence.

\textsuperscript{94} See King, “Duns Scotus on Possibilities, Powers, and the Possible,” 199.
the tip of the iceberg: he can further explain this concept by appeal to power. Given his understanding of the relation between power and potency, Scotus cannot avail himself of powers—subjective potency is founded upon an (actual) essence and is towards being in a certain way, but there is no passive power in the actual essence for this.

### 7.3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to present Henry’s and Scotus’s replies to Aristotle’s argument that self-motion requires the same thing to be in an act and potency at the same time, which is supposed to be an impossibility. I argued that Henry and Scotus agree that self-motion requires something to be in act and in potency at the same time, but they offer distinct interpretations of what this means and how this is possible. For Henry, a self-mover is in act because it has a power to cause in itself a perfection, while it is in potency because it is possible for it to receive this perfection. In his solution, act and potency refer to having a power and being potential. For Scotus, a self-mover is in act and potency because it has an active and a passive principle by whose mutual manifestation a perfection is principiated in the self-mover. In his solution, act and potency refer to having a power; Scotus does not appeal to the concept of being potential or possibility. I suggested two reasons for why Scotus does not use the concept of possibility to explain self-motion. On the one hand, in contrast to Henry, Scotus thinks that in principiation, and so in self-motion too, what needs to be explained is not how a form or perfection is received in something so that an accidental compound is principiated, but how that form is principiated. Thus, he is not immediately interested in how a self-mover is in potency to that form. On the other hand, Scotus has a different view than Henry about how possibility and power are related. While by saying that a self-mover is in potentiality to receiving a form, Henry understands that the self-mover has a passive power for that form, Scotus does not. For Scotus, potentiality is not grounded in power: when the self-mover is said to be in potentiality, Scotus understands this to mean not that this self-mover is in potentiality to a form, but that the self-mover is in potentiality to being in a certain way. But to explain this potentiality, Scotus does not refer to power, for the self-mover does not have any power to be in a certain way: it either is, or it is not. Thus, Scotus cannot use the concept of potentiality to explain how self-motion is possible, for this concept would just give a description of self-motion.
Chapter 8 Henry and Scotus on Self-Motion and Incompatible Features

If self-motion is possible, it requires the presence of incompatible features in the same thing. Self-movers have active and passive powers for the same feature; when they cause in themselves their features, they are moving and being moved, that is, they have an action and a passion at the same time and with respect to the same feature, or they are both agents and patients. But if self-motion requires the presence of incompatible features, how can self-motion be possible?

Maybe the problem is not so severe. It helps to notice that at the ontological level, the worry about the incompatibility of active and passive powers, action and passion, or being an agent and a patient is a worry about the incompatibility of relational items. Active and passive powers involve relations to features, as actions and passions do, while agents and patients are related to each other. Incompatibility between relational items is, however, different from the incompatibility between contraries or contradictories. While nothing can be at the same time black and white, it is clear that the same person can be both a father and a son. Similarly, many things have active and passive powers, many things are agents and patients, and many things have actions and passions with respect to the same feature—in fact, Aristotelian philosophy relies on this being possible. Thus, to understand what might be problematic about self-motion, we need first to understand better the nature of relative opposition.

In the first section, I explain in more detail what the worry is about the co-presence of relative items such as active and passive powers, action and passion, and being an agent and a patient in the same thing, at the same time, and in the same respect. As we will see, there is no persuasive argument against the possibility of active and passive powers for the same feature; however, defenders of the possibility of self-motion still need to respond to Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VIII.5 (discussed in chapter 2) that no self-motion is possible because nothing can have an action and a passion at the same time (or nothing can be an agent and a patient) and in the same respect. Thus, this leaves the focus of the chapter to be on how Henry and Scotus respond to this Aristotelian argument. In sections 2 and 3, I will discuss how Henry and Scotus respond to this argument, by explaining what they mean by action and passion, and being an agent and a patient.
8.1. Self-Motion, Relative Opposition and Distinct Features

When we worry that a self-mover has active and passive powers for the same feature, or has actions and passions or is an agent and a patient at the same time and with respect to the same feature, prima facie, we seem to worry that in a self-mover there are incompatible features in the same thing at the same time. But the worry is not simply about incompatible features, for no medieval philosopher argues that having the active power to cause φ in something else and having the passive power to receive φ in itself are incompatible. The presence of these two powers in the same thing is fundamental for Aristotelian metaphysics, for many things have an active and passive power for φ. For example, a hot stove has a passive power for heat, for it is hot, but it also has an active power for heat, for it can make a pot hot. Likewise, no medieval philosopher argues that having an action and passion with respect to φ are incompatible in the same thing. At the same time, the pot on the stove is made hot by the stove, and so it suffers a passion, but it can also make something else hot, and so it has an action with respect to another thing. So the worry about the presence of incompatible features in the same self-mover is not simply about the presence of active and passive powers to cause φ, nor is it about the presence of an action and passion concerning φ. What then is the worry about?

In self-motion, we are dealing with opposition between relational items. Active and passive powers, actions and passions, and agent and patients are all relational items, for they refer to something other than the thing that has the powers, the actions, or the passions. For example, a power is a power for a certain feature; an action and a passion are attributed to something and concern a certain item; agents and patients concur to bring about an item or have actions and passions. If active and passive powers, actions and passions, and agents and patients are relative items, then these items must be incompatible or opposed as relative items.

Ancient and medieval authors recognized that the opposition between relatives is a special case of opposition.¹ To explain it, Simplicius starts by identifying some important features of relatives. He remarks that relatives, in contrast to other items, must be thought in relation to each other. For

¹ Ancient and medieval commentators know that in the Categories and Metaphysics Aristotle recognizes different forms of opposition, but they are puzzled by the question whether these forms have something in common. For medieval discussions about this issue see Costantino Marmo, “Types of Opposition in the Postpredicamenta in Thirteenth-Century Commentaries,” in La tradition médiévale des Catégories (XIIe-XVe siècles): Actes du XIIIe symposium européen de logique et de sémantique médiévales (Avignon 6-10 Juin 2000), ed. Joël Biard and Irène Rosier-Catach (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 85–103. Marmo does not discuss or refer to Simplicius.
example, what a father is cannot be thought without thinking what a son is. Moreover, relatives are simultaneous (as soon as there is a father, there is also a son) and need to coexist with each other (as long as there is a father, there is a son). Given these features, Simplicius notices that in contrast to other opposed items, what seem to be opposed relatives do not mutually destroy or cancel each other. While, for example, the presence of whiteness in a wall removes the presence of another colour in it, or the presence of heat in a room cancels the presence of cold in it, the same person can be both a father and a son. In the end, Simplicius settles for the view that, concerning relatives, opposition must be about the impossibility of coexistence of these relatives in the same subject and with respect to the same thing.² For example, nobody can be a father and a son at the same time, in the same way, and with respect to the same person.

Thomas Aquinas explains that relatives are opposed not simply because of the aspect of relatedness but because of their aspect of relatedness to *something.*³ For example, the relation of fatherhood is opposed to the relation of being a son because they cannot co-exist in the same foundation towards the same *terminus:* nothing can be both a father and a son of the same person. In fact, relatives cancel or destroy each other only when they are with respect to the same *terminus.* However, it is possible for somebody to be both a father and a son with respect to different persons. Given that relatives are opposed in virtue of their aspects of relatedness together with the *termini* of these aspects, it is possible that what seem to be two opposed relatives coexist in the same thing.⁴

Simplicius and Aquinas agree that there is only one case in which opposed relatives cancel each other, namely the case in which they would be present in the same thing and with respect to the same feature, but neither of these authors give any clear reason why this case is problematic. Although nobody would dispute the claim that no one can be both a father and a son with respect to the same

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² See Simplicius, *Commentaire sur les Catégories,* 522: “Simul autem et quia ad aliquid non opponuntur similiter alii oppositis, hac utens ratione ostendet, omnibus enim ad invicem dici convenit. Sed quomodo opposita ipsa ad aliquid, si simul sunt et coexistunt invicem, et convertuntur ad invicem? Peremptiva enim invicem esse videntur opposita. Aut non quod peremptivum proprium est oppositorum, sed non esse circa idem et secundum idem et in ipsis ad aliquid inest; neque enim haec circa idem consubsistunt.”

³ See Thomas Aquinas, *De potentia,* q. 7, a. 8, ad 4: “negatio enim removet affirmationem, et secundum hoc ei opponitur; oppositio vero privationis et habitus et contrarietatis includit oppositionem contradictionis, ut IV Metaph. dicitur. Non autem est hoc in relativis. Non enim per hoc opponitur filius patri quod ipsum removat, sed propter rationem habitudinis ad ipsum.”

⁴ Ibid.: “Ad quartum dicendum, quod oppositio relationis in duobus differt ab aliis oppositionibus: quorum primum est quod in alii oppositis unum dicitur alteri opponi, in quantum ipsum removet. […] Et ex hoc causatur secunda differentia, quia in alii oppositis semper alterum est imperfectum; quod accusit ratione negationis quae includitur in privatione et altero contrariorum.”
person, it is not clear why nothing can be active and passive at the same time and with respect to the same thing. Is the relation between being active and being passive similar to that between a father and a son?

Given these considerations, it makes sense to ask about how medieval authors think about the opposition between active and passive in the same thing. Do they offer a new argument for their incompatibility, one that is tailored to the specific case of activity and passivity, or do they assume that what applies to relatives such as father and son should apply to any pair of relatives? Unfortunately, when medieval authors raise the objection that if self-motion were possible, then any self-mover would have at the same time two incompatible powers (an active and a passive power for \( \varphi \)), they have little to say about why this is the case. For example, Godfrey of Fontaines says in the early *Quodl.* VII, q. 6 that active and passive powers are incompatible because act and potency are opposed.\(^5\) However, this does not seem a convincing argument, for potency and act are divisions of being, while active and passive powers are not. Probably aware of this rebuttal, Godfrey argues later in his career, in *Quodl.* XV, q. 4, that if one accepts the presence of active and passive powers for the same feature in the same thing, then one needs also to accept that their manifestations, which must also be incompatible, would be present in the same thing at the same time.\(^6\) This last explanation grounds the incompatibility of powers in the incompatibility of their manifestations and thus collapses the worry about the incompatibility of powers into the worry about the incompatibility of their manifestation.

But is there any good argument for why active and passive powers are *per se* incompatible, one that does not appeal to the manifestations of powers? Thomas of Bailly, a theologian writing after Henry, tries to give such an argument.\(^7\) He attempts to show that active and passive powers are

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\(^5\) See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VII, q. 6 (PhB 3: 338): “Sed specialiter prosequendum est propositum quantum ad illum modum relativorum quonodoo aliqua referuntur ad invicem secundum potentiam activam et passivam in quibus maxime aliqui conantur ostendere hoc esse possibile, seilicit quod unum et idem hoc modo referatur ad se ipsum. Sed hoc non potest uni et eidem secundum idem realre convenire propter manifestam oppositionem et repugnantiam actus et potentiae, quae nec in corporalibus, nec in spiritualibus possunt eidem simul secundum unum et idem secundum rem inesse vel convenire, sicut etiam nec alia quae contradictionem includunt.”

\(^6\) See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* XV, q. 4 (PhB 14: 21–22): “Quaero ergo utrum potentiae activae repugnet directe et per se quod sit potentia passiva respectu eiusdem aut non. Si sic, habeo propositum, quia cum movere conveniat alter per potentiam activam et moveri per potentiam passivam, impossibile est quod idem et secundum idem moveat et moveatur. Si autem dicatur quod in nullo repugnat potentiae activae quod sit potentia passiva respectu eiusdem, tunc sequitur quod in omnibus idem et secundum idem poterit esse movens et motum; hoc autem est falsum secundum omnes.”

relatively opposed and so cannot be present in the same thing, at the same time and in the same respect. To do this, he inquires into what distinguishes the different kinds of opposition between contradictories, contraries, and relations.

First, Bailly remarks that although contradiction seems to be the strongest form of opposition, contradictories can be said at the same time of the same thing. For example, a fire can be said to be hot and non-hot at the same time. It is hot in virtue of its form, but it is non-hot in virtue of another form that it contains. For example, in virtue of its dryness, fire can be said to be non-hot, for dryness is something entirely different from hot, and so it can be said to be non-hot. This might suggest that other incompatible features could also exist in a self-mover. Bailly is, however, very clear: the presence of contradictories in the same one thing is due to the peculiarities of the contradictories’ syntactical formation, a feature that cannot be generalized to other forms of opposition. Contradictories are constructed by negating a term using the adverb ‘non’: from ‘hot’, one forms the contradictory ‘non-hot’. The adverb ‘non’ enlarges the scope of the predicate so that the predicate containing ‘non’ can be truly said of almost anything, beings as well as nothing. For example, the predicate ‘non-hot’ can be truly predicated of something cold, of anything that it is essentially not hot, and even of non-being as in the sentence ‘nothing is non-hot’.

With this explanation, Bailly points to a feature of predicates esse actu formaliter tale et esse potentia tale; qua hec tantam oppositionem et repugnantiam habent.” Thomas of Bailly is the only author I have found who tries to give an argument for the incompatibility between active and passive powers.

8 Ibid., 96: “quia cum sunt quatuor genera oppositionum […] ubi dicitur quod oppposita dicuntur contradictio, contraria, ad aliquid, privatio et habitus; sed contradictoria non simul insunt eadem, nec contraria nec privativa. Ergo nec opposita relative cuius modi sunt potentia activa et passiva respectu eiusdem.”

9 The issue that Bailly addresses is similar to the contemporary discussions about the limitations of Aristotle’s defence of the principle of non-contradiction (PNC) from Metaphysics IV.4, 1006b28–34. It has been argued that Aristotle’s defense of PNC applies only to essential predication (in essential predication, predicates say what something is). In its application to accidental predication (in accidental predication, predicates say how something is), the principle seems problematic because the predicate is not said of a singular subject. For example, when white is predicated of a paper, being white refers not to a singular subject, but to a composite of two things: a whiteness and a paper. There are many studies on the problem about the scope of the principle of non-contradiction. For the view that the principle is restricted to essential predication see especially J. Łukasiewicz, “Aristotle on the Law of Contradiction (1910),” in Articles on Aristotle Volume 3: Metaphysics, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield, and Richard Sorabji (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 50–62; G.E.M. Anscombe, Three Philosophers (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1961), 39–45. For a view that proposes that the principle applies also to accidental predication see M.V. Wedin, “The Scope of Non-Contradiction: A Note on Aristotle’s ‘Elenctic’ Proof in Metaphysics Γ 4,” Apeiron 32, no. 3 (1999): 231–42.

10 See Thomas of Bailly, Quodl. II, q. 6, 96: “Sed dices quod contraddictoria verificantur de codem simul, secundum tamen aliam rationem, sicut ignis est calidus et non calidus, quia secundum formam caloris est calidus et secundum formam siccitatis non calidus quia siccitas est non caliditas. Ergo et opposita relative, scilicet potentia activa et passiva respectu eiusdem.”

11 Ibid.: “Sed dicendum quod contraddictio ratione generalitas et ambitus negationis que est altera pars contradictionis, in hoc differt ab aliis oppositis quia alterum contradictatorium, in quantum contradictorium est, verificantur de quolibet sive sit ens sive non ens; non ens enim vel nichil calor non est. […] Ita etiam propter eamdem generalitatem negationis potest.
such as ‘non-hot’ or ‘non-rational’, etc.: predicates of this kind do not denote natural kinds. They are instead, as contemporary philosophers have noted, negations of natural kinds, for their denotata “do not have the sort of coherence and unity that a feature must have; they do not have a nature or essence of their own and could not form the basis of any possible taxonomy of entities.”

‘Non-hot’ and ‘non-rational’ do not denote any of the entities that are traditionally accepted in Aristotelian physics and metaphysics.

Active and passive powers cannot be thought of on the model of hot and non-hot. Given Bailly’s considerations about the nature of negative predicates such as ‘non-hot’ and their denotata, a passive power cannot be thought as a non-active power. If this were the case, a passive power would not denote a feature of anything and would not make any causal contribution. But both active and passive powers are features of things and they are supposed to make causal contributions.

Next, Bailly discusses the opposition between contraries and argues that the scope of contrary items is more limited than that of contradictories, and therefore they cannot be said at the same time about the same thing. In the case of contraries, one of the terms of the pair includes a negation of the other term, but the scope of the negation is not large enough to permit the application of the negative term to both beings and non-beings. For example, ‘cold’ are ‘hot’ are contraries: ‘cold’ includes a negation of ‘hot’, not a general one such as ‘non-hot’ includes, but a determinate one. By a ‘determinate negation’, Bailly seems to mean that if X is the determinate negation of Y, then if X pertains to a subject, Y cannot pertain at the same time to the same subject and in the same respect. For example, ‘cold’ cannot be applied at the same time as ‘hot’ is.

utraque contradictorum verificari de eodem simul secundum aliquem rationem non tamen secundum quod contradictorium est, quia iam amittit rationem contradictoriae cum accipiat pro alio sicut pro forma contingente includente negationem que absolute sumptta erat contradictoriae; quia enim non calor potest convenire non solum formae contrarie ut frigido, sed etiam forma contingentia ipsi calori sicut sicco et cuicumque ali formae vel subiecto a calido; quidquid enim est aliud essentialiter a calido est non calor; ideo rationem huiusmodi possunt verificari de eodem secundum aliam rationem, et ut sic non sunt iam contradictoria; et hoc predicando in concreto denominativa, non tamen in abstracto predicando essentia predicative.”


13 But why can only some of these negative predicates be truly predicated of things? When non-hot is said of fire, the generality of the denotatum of the negative term ‘non-hot’ allows us to find in fire a feature in virtue of which it is non-hot, for example, its dryness. On the other hand, when ‘non-rational’ is said of a human being, despite the generality of the denotatum of the negative term ‘non-rational’, we cannot find any feature in virtue of which a man is non-rational, for a human being is essentially rational.

14 See Thomas of Bailly, Quodl. II, q. 6, 96: “Sed non sic est in aliis oppositis, quia alterum oppositorum, in alio genere oppositionis a contradicione, includit negationem alterius oppositi non absolute sed in natura determinata sicut frigidum includit negationem calidi in forma contraria ipsi calido, que repugnantia habet informando subjectum; et ideo de eodem
Bailly does not say that active and passive powers are contraries, but he argues that an active power includes a *determinate* negation of the passive power. An active power for $\phi$ does not necessarily prohibit the existence of a passive power for $\phi$, nor of this passive power for $\phi$: Aristotelian metaphysics allows for things to have both active and passive powers for the same feature. In fact, related active and passive powers seem to behave as opposed relational items: being a father does not prohibit someone from also being a son. Thus, in the same way that no one can be both a father and a son with respect to the same person, nothing can have an active and passive power with respect to the same feature.

There are two ways to understand how powers are relational and thus, there are two ways to interpret Bailly’s claim about active powers including a determinate negation of their corresponding passive powers. According to one view, powers are relational items because they are related to their acts; according to another view, powers are relational items because they are related to other powers—an active power is related to a suitable passive power.

It is more likely that Bailly envisages the case in which powers are related to their acts and so he objects to a view similar to that of Henry of Ghent. When powers are understood as being related to acts, then, according to Bailly, active and passive power for *the same instance of* $\phi$ are so opposed in the same thing that they cancel each other. Why is this the case? Bailly does not give a reason, but, we can find one by comparing the case of active and passive powers with another case of relative opposition. It is clear why somebody cannot be a father and a son to the same person: we just need to take into consideration how one becomes a father or a son. Similarly, to see why an active and a passive power for the same instance of $\phi$ are opposed, we need to take into consideration how one gets to have such an active or a passive power. If a thing is a univocal cause with respect to a certain

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15 Ibid., 97: “Similiter dico de oppositis relative sicut sunt potentia activa et passiva respectu eiusdem. Potentia enim passiva includit negationem active potentie, non absolute sed in natura determinata ipsius potentiae passive, que secundum se repugnantiam et oppositionem habet in informando subiectum.” See also ibid., 102.

16 If Bailly thought that powers are relational because active powers are related to their corresponding passive powers, then his target would be precisely Scotus’s view. Recall that for Scotus, active and passive powers involve mutually related entities; indeed, active and passive powers have primary and *per se* objects, which are common features (primary object) or very concrete features (*per se* object) that explain why suitable powers are related and mutually manifest. As the previous chapters have showed, Scotus claims that there is no incompatibility in active and passive powers being thus related, nor is there any impossibility in a thing having active and passive powers that are thus related. Does Bailly give an argument that would contradict Scotus’s claim? Bailly neither gives such an argument nor does he seem to be concerned with the relation between powers.
feature $\phi$, it has an active power to cause $\phi$ only when it is $\phi$. For example, a hot pot cannot cause heat in itself because for this it needs to be already hot; but once the pot is hot, it does not need to make itself hot again.

Note, however, that this argument does not work in the case of a thing that is an equivocal cause with respect to $\phi$ and also has a passive power for $\phi$. We know that precisely these kinds of things are self-movers: self-movers have a power to receive an instance of $\phi$ in themselves and have the power to cause that precise instance of $\phi$. Indeed, there does not seem anything wrong with the origins of these two powers so that their presence in the same thing is prohibited. But if this is the case, then there does not seem to be any good argument why the same one thing cannot have active and passive powers for the same instance of a feature: the argument works only in the case of univocal agents and we already know that no univocal agent is a self-mover.

Based on Henry's view about the nature of causal powers, one might raise against Bailly a more general point. The case that Bailly envisages as problematic is the case in which a thing has an active and a passive power for the same instance of a feature $\phi$. But for Henry, powers are not determinations of a thing to a certain instance of $\phi$, but to the species or the genus $\phi$: powers are powers for kinds of acts, not for instances falling under these kinds. I have the power to utter a certain type of sound, but there is no special power to utter a certain sound at a certain moment. When this happens, instead of saying that I have a power to utter that specific sound, I should say that I manifested my power to utter a certain type of sound. If one agrees that powers are for types or kinds, then Bailly’s argument is not very persuasive, for the whole argument is predicated on the view that active and passive powers for the same instance of a feature are opposed.\footnote{Note that this point cannot be raised by someone who maintains Scotus’s view about powers. Because on Scotus’s view, powers are also principles, so they involve instances of their acts: recall that the \textit{per se} object of a power is a concrete version of a common feature.}

These considerations about the relative opposition between active and passive powers are only partially relevant for the case of actions and passions. In \textit{Physica} VIII.5, Aristotle argues that nobody can be a teacher and a student at the same time and with respect to the same piece of knowledge, that is, nothing can have an action and a passion at the same time and with respect to the same feature. This suggests that like active and passive powers, actions and passions are relatively opposed: they are neither contrary nor contradictory, but they would cancel each other if they were in the same thing and with respect to the same feature. However, the problems that need to be addressed in relation to
action and a passion are different from those related to having active and passive powers for the same feature.

First, Aristotle’s argument from *Physics* VIII.5 raises the question of how one can define action and passion, if self-motion is possible. Recall that in chapter 2, in discussing the first proof against self-motion from Aristotle’s *Physics* VIII.5, I explained that in the usual cases of causation, action and a passion are items related to distinct entities: an action is an item from the agent, while the passion is the same item but as it is in the patient. In self-motion, since the agent and the patient are the same, one needs to explain how the action of a self-mover is distinct from its passion. This is one of the main issues at the centre of this chapter.

Second, Aristotle’s argument brings to the fore the question of how a self-mover becomes an agent and a patient. Agents are related to patients: in the usual cases of causation, these entities are distinct things, for example, a fire is different from the pot that it warms. In self-motion, however, the same entity is an agent and a patient. Thus, in self-motion, the same one thing is related to itself in two different ways, as an agent to a patient and as a patient to an agent. But how is it possible for one and the same thing to be the foundation of these two real relations? The question is not about why being an agent and a patient are not incompatible features, but distinct ones. What is problematic is how suddenly two real relations supervene on the same entity with respect to itself. But for the relations between the agent and the patient to supervene on the self-mover at a certain temporal moment, there must be at least some change. If it is the self-mover itself that changes, then there is no perfect self-motion, for the self-mover as an agent would be different from the self-mover as a patient. The issue of what happens to the self-mover so that it can become an agent and a patient is a second issue that will be at the centre of this chapter.¹⁸

To sum up, although prima facie self-motion seems to require the presence of incompatible features in the same thing at the same time, the real issues concern what it means for a self-mover to have an action and a passion and what it is for it to become an agent and a patient. In what follows I will pursue what Henry and Scotus have to say about these two issues.

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¹⁸ There is another issue related to the issue of how a self-mover can have an action and a passion, namely how a self-mover suddenly has an action and passion at a certain moment. This issue was addressed in the previous chapters: for a self-mover to act or suffer, the presence of a *sine qua non* cause is required. Such a cause explains why the self-mover acts or suffers at the temporal moment it does act and suffer. Given that this issue was addressed in the previous chapters, I will not discuss it here.
8.2. Henry on Distinct Relations in Self-motion

A self-mover has at the same time active and passive powers for the same feature; when it manifests these powers, the self-mover is at the same time an agent and a patient or has an action and undergoes a passion with respect to the same feature. As an agent, such a self-mover is related to itself insofar as it is a patient, for agents and patients are related to each other. These relations are different from the relations that Henry thinks are involved in having an active and a passive power for a certain feature $\varphi$, for the latter supervene on the self-mover when God determines an essence to an act, while the relations involved in having an action and a passion, and being an agent and a patient supervene at the moment the self-mover acts and suffers. Thus, concerning the latter relations, the question arises: in virtue of what do they supervene? Or, how is it possible that on the same one thing, the self-mover, two distinct kind of relations supervene at a certain moment?

Henry devotes the whole of *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2 to answering the question about whether it is possible for the same thing to be the foundation of distinct real relations,\(^{19}\) or more precisely, whether (and how) it is possible for something to be the foundation of the distinct relations of being active and passive.\(^{20}\) Note that Henry starts from the view that these two distinct relations are real, but he does not assume that they obviously cancel each other in the same thing. Thus, his strategy is to show under what conditions distinct real relations can supervene on the same thing.

To understand Henry’s reply to the question about the distinct real relations of being active and passive, I will first discuss the general case, namely, what he says about how one and the same thing can be the foundation of distinct relations. Henry’s reply to this issue will point us in the right direction to understanding how it is possible for something to be an agent and a patient at the same time and with respect to the same feature. As we will see, Henry allows for something to be the

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\(^{19}\) Already in *Quodl.* XI, q. 6, Henry claims that distinct real relations do not require a real distinction in their foundation. He backs up this claim with an example: the same whiteness can be the foundation for both a relation of similitude to another whiteness and a relation of dissimilitude to blackness. See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XI, q. 6 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 454vQ). See also *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 559rZ). Note that Henry talks here about opposite relations to different termini. Those who reject the possibility of self-motion do not have an issue with this case. What they reject as impossible is the coexistence in the same one thing of opposite relations to the same terminus: for example, the same one whiteness is both similar and dissimilar to blackness. Henry’s example does not address this case.

\(^{20}\) Before discussing his solution, a word of advice: as we will see in what follows, it is not always clear how these relations map onto active and passive powers or actions and passions, or how they are related to being an agent or a patient. Moreover, Henry’s discussion in *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2 is focused on principation, which he seems to equate with production. Recall from chapter 3, where I discussed this issue, that principation (and production) is a relation between *supposita*. This further complicates Henry’s engagement with the issue of the incompatibility of features in self-motion. Thus, part of the aim of this section will also be to disentangle his views on all these distinct concepts.
foundation of distinct relations if there is a certain composition in the foundation. The question then becomes what kind of composition is necessary for the same thing to be an agent and a patient at the same time and with respect to the same feature. But before seeing what kind of composition is necessary, we need to see what Henry means by actions and passions, and agents and patients. This discussion will help us to uncover the kind of composition necessary for the possibility of self-motion. Thus, after discussing what Henry means by actions, passions, agents, and patients in general, I will return to the issue of how it is possible for the same one thing to be an agent and a patient at the same time and with respect to the same feature.

8.2.1. The Foundation for Distinct Relations

In being an agent and a patient, a self-mover is related to itself in different ways. But how is it possible for the same one thing to be related in different ways to the same terminus?

Henry claims that for a thing to be the foundation of distinct real relations to the same terminus, that thing needs to be somehow composed. A thing that is completely simple cannot be the foundation of distinct real relations.\(^2\) This can be easily seen in the case of material things. Material things are made up of features that are really distinct entities, such as matter, substantial forms, and accidental forms. These distinct entities can ground really distinct relations. For example, hylomorphic compounds that are also self-movers are the foundations of the distinct real relations of being active and passive in virtue of really distinct parts. As I explained in chapter 5, section 5.3, a heavy thing moves in virtue of its accidental form of heaviness, but it is moved in virtue of being something composed of matter and form. Henry is not interested in further pursuing how distinct real relations arise on these kinds of things because the solution in this case seems obvious to him.

How can things that do not have in their structure really distinct features be the foundation of distinct real relations? One feature that all such things have in common is that they are immaterial. Henry’s focus is on how it is possible to ground real distinct relations in immaterial things such as souls, angels, or God. To solve this issue, he makes an important remark, namely that although the features of these immaterial beings are not really distinct, they are of two sorts: some are relative, others are absolute.

\(^2\) See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2, (1518 Badius 2: fol. 559rZ): “sed quaerimus de eodem simplici secundum rem de quo distinguo quia aut cum hoc quod ipsum est idem re, est etiam idem ratione, aut cum hoc est diversum ratione. Si primo modo dico quod numquam in eodem neque in deo neque in creaturis diversae relationes reales fundantur.”
Only God can be the foundation of distinct real relations in virtue of having absolute features that are only rationally distinct from the divine essence. These absolute features are features that ground aspects of relatedness, not to something outside of God, but to some of His other internal features. For example, the divine intellect and will are absolute features that ground distinct real relations to other features in God; more precisely, the divine essence in virtue of its intellectual aspect is the foundation for two distinct real relations, those of actively and passively generating the Son, while the same essence in virtue of its volitional aspect is the foundation for two more distinct relations, those of actively and passively spirating the Holy Spirit.

Any substance other than God is the foundation of distinct real relations only insofar as it has in its structure features that relate it to something external to it. Thus, created things can be the foundation for distinct real relations only insofar as items in their makeup are ordered to something other than those things. Such features can ground different kinds of distinct relations. The unproblematic case is that in which a thing has in its makeup features that ground distinct relations (for example, the relations of similarity and dissimilarity) but to two different termini. For example, Socrates’s skin colour grounds his similarity to Plato (both are black), but also his dissimilarity from Aristotle (who is white).

The problematic case is the one in which relations are grounded in features that relate the thing that has them to the same terminus. This case is relevant for immaterial created self-movers. Since an immaterial self-mover is an agent and a patient, it must, in virtue of being an agent, be related to itself insofar as it is a patient, while in virtue of being a patient, it must also be related to itself insofar as it is an agent. This must be so because agents are related to their suitable patients. So what are the features that allow a self-mover to be the foundation of the distinct relations involved in being

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22 Ibid.: “Si ergo sit aliquid idem simplicitate rei et diversum ratione, aut ergo ratione absoluta et hoc est absque ordine ad aliud extrinsecum quod exigit ut sit illarum relationem fundamentum. Si primo modo dico quod in solo deo super idem secundum diversas rationes fundantur respectus disparati secundum duo genera relationum, puta secundum actum generationis active et passive super eandem essentiam ut habet rationem intellectus et secundum actum spirationis active et passive super divinum essentiam ut habet rationem voluntatis.”

23 Ibid.: “Si secundo modo aut ergo differt idem re et ratione respectiva unius ad unum aut unius ad diversa. Si secundo modo, sic: in creaturis bene diverse relationes reales fundantur super idem re simplici secundum ordinem eius ad diversa, puta super eandem albedinem in uno albo fundatur similitudo in ordine suo ad aliud album et dissimilitudo in ordine suo ad nigrum.”

24 Ibid.: “Sed quattuor de pluralitate relationum realium in codem simplici secundum rem super quod ambae fundantur secundum diversas rationes respectivas unius ad unum, scilicet illarum rationum inter se.”
an agent and a patient? To anticipate a bit, what we will see playing a fundamental role in the emergence of the distinct relations between the agent and the patient is the form that the self-mover causes in itself. But this form also plays a role in the emergence of actions and passions. So in the next section I will discuss what Henry means by action and passion.

8.2.2. Action and Passion

Consider a fire that heats a pot: the heating of the pot is the action of fire, while being heated is a passion that the pot undergoes. However, there is no action or a passion unless there is heat in the pot. This is different from the active power of the fire and the passive power of the pot. Active and passive powers are relations to acts, while by acts Henry understands either an action or a passion or the effects of such actions and passions; but they do not require the actual presence of these acts.

Indeed, a thing might have a power and that power might never be manifested. But it is impossible for something to have an action or a passion without the actual presence of an act.

Like powers, actions and passions are relational items. This can be seen from the category in which they fall. Recall that in chapter 4 I mentioned Henry’s view that only items in the first three categories are things that exist or can exist by themselves. For example, substances are things that exist by themselves, while qualities and quantities are things that exist in something else, either by informing their subject, as qualities do, or by measuring it, as quantities do. The remaining categories, among which one must count action and passion, refer to circumstances or modes of being of these things.

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25 For the case of passive powers see Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 35, q. 2 (Leuven 28: 26–27): “Nunc autem ita est, quod in rebus naturalibus potestia passiva respicit duplicem actum quo perficitur, ut iam dictum est supra, unum qui est ipse motus et transmutatio, cuius est per se et primo principium susceptible, alium qui est ipsa dispositio acquisita per motum, ut forma substantialis vel accidentalis qualitatis aut quantitatis aut situs in ubi.” On active powers, see Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 35, q. 4 (Leuven 28: 35–36): “Dicunt ergo, quod in rebus creatis potentia activa non solum respicit tamquam principium ipsam operationem, sed etiam effectum ex actione derelictum; in Deo vero solum respicit effectum et non actionem, ut in Deo salvetur ratio potentiae activae solummodo quantum ad hoc, quod est principium effectus, non autem quantum ad hoc, quod est principium actionis, quae est divina essentia, ut procedit obiectum. Quod non potest stare, quoniam nihil est effectus nisi fiat ab agente; nihil autem fit nisi actione agentis. Procul dubio ergo, tam in Deo quam in creaturis, semper potestia activa actionis principium est. Dico, ratione qua actio est. Actio enim sub ratione qua actio est, semper requirit aliquid principium elicitivum eius.”

26 See Henry of Ghent, *SQO*, art. 32, q. 5 (Leuven 27: 94): “dicimus quod septem praedicamenta quae de formalis significacione sua potius praedicant circumstantias rerum quam rem aliquam, cum distinguuntur per accidentale quod subest respectui quem dicunt, et super quod fundatur ille respectus, ergo aut illud accidentale convenit rei subjectae secundum se et absolute, aut ex connexione quadam cum illo ad quem habet respectum.” In saying that these categories signify the circumstances of things, Henry follows Boethius. See ibid., 87.
they signify something insofar as it is related to something else, so they are relational in nature.

In fact, action and passion are a special kind of relation: they are extrinsically advenient relations. Like relations, action and passion are constituted by an aspect of relatedness (\textit{respectus}) and an entity on which this aspect is founded. The difference among items in the category of relation and the categories of action and passion concerns the entity on which the aspect of relatedness is founded. For relations, the aspect of relatedness that enters their makeup is founded upon something accidental that pertains to a thing according to itself and absolutely. For example, a hot pot is similar to another hot thing, for example, a fire, because both have the quality of heat. In this case, heat is considered as a quality that informs a thing; we do not inquire from where, when, why, or how heat comes or is in the hot pot; we just consider the presence of heat in the pot. Because the hot pot is similar to the fire without considering anything other than the hot pot and the fire, the aspect of relatedness (of similarity) is intrinsically advenient. In contrast, the aspects of relatedness that enter into the makeup of actions and passions are founded upon something accidental that pertains to a thing because of a connection to something else—more precisely because of the connection to that thing towards which the aspects of relatedness are. The aspect of relatedness is extrinsically advenient because it supervenes on an accidental entity only insofar as the connection of this entity to other entities is considered. For example, when heat is considered insofar as it comes to the pot from something else or when it is considered how heat exists in the pot compared with other qualities of the pot, for

27 Ibid.: “Est ergo, ut patet ex iam dicto Boethii, ratio illorum septem praedicamentorum significare rem euis esse est in aliquo in respectu ad aliquid.”
28 Ibid., 95: “Propter huiusmodi rationem accidentalitatis in istis sex diversam contractam ab illo super quod fundatur eorum respectus ab accidentalitate in praedicamento relationis, contracta ab illo super quod fundatur eius respectus, in Sex principiis dicuntur ista sex accidentia ‘extrinsecus adventientia’, cum tamen proprie dicta relatio dicatur esse de ‘accidentibus intrisecus adventientibus’.” Note that he talks here not only about actions and passions but also other accidents such as place, time, habit etc..
29 Ibid., 94: “Discurrendo igitur per singula, dicimus quod septem praedicamenta quae de formali significacione sua potius praedicant circumstantias rerum quam rem rem aliquam, cum distinguuntur per accidentalere quod subest respectui quem dicunt, et super quod fundatur ille respectus, ergo aut illud accidentalite convenit rei subjectae secundum se et absolute, aut ex connexione quadam cum illo ad quem habet respectum.” See also Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} XV, q. 5 (Leuven 20: 25): “Unde et distinguuntur solummodo penes diversitatem modorum fundandi illa super res praedicamentorum absolutorum et referendi secundum illos aliquid ad aliquid, hoc modo quia ille respectus qui est ad aliquid esse aut convenit rei absolutae ex se sola, et sic est respectus praedicamenti relationis proprie dictae aut convenit rei absolutae non nisi ex connexione quadam sui cum aliqua re alia, et est respectus aliorum sex praedicamentorum.”
30 See Henry of Ghent, \textit{SQO}, art. 32, q. 5 (Leuven 27: 95): “Si vero accidentalae, super quod fundatur respectus, accidunt rei subjectae ex connexione quadam cum illo ad quod habet respectum, tunc sunt alia sex praedicamenta.” Note that this understanding of how the aspects of relatedness entering the makeup of actions and passions supervene applies to all the categories besides substance, quantity, quality, and relation.
example, its shape, the aspects of relatedness that arise are the ones that enter into the makeup of actions and passions.

To better understand Henry’s view about the nature of actions and passions, we need first to see what are the entities on which the aspects of relatedness are founded. Henry explains that action and passion involve an aspect of relatedness that is founded on either motion or a disposition acquired through motion:

[Text 1] Here it must be known that that accidental item which happens to a thing in virtue of its relation to something else, [and] on which the aspect of relatedness to that other thing is founded, is nothing other than motion or a disposition acquired through motion.  

In my view, we need to be open-minded about what can be the foundation of the aspects of relatedness. Although Henry refers in [Text 1] to motion or a disposition acquired through motion, any item that can be caused by something can be such a foundation. Consider the case of Socrates’s action of teaching Plato. This action is constituted by an aspect of relatedness founded on an accidental item that happens to Plato in virtue of his relation to Socrates. In our case, since there is no motion properly speaking, the accidental item that can function as a foundation for an aspect of relatedness must be the piece of knowledge that Plato now knows from Socrates. Similarly, Plato’s passion of being taught is constituted by an aspect of relatedness founded on the same piece of knowledge that is in Plato.

It is important, however, to understand why Henry picks motion as a suitable foundation for the aspects of relatedness. He does so because motion is suited by its nature to relate a moving thing to many other entities: for example, to what moves the thing, but also to where the mover is, to its end, to time, etc. This means that with respect to motion, it makes sense to ask questions about

31 See Henry of Ghent, SQO, art. 32, q. 5 (Leuven 27: 96): “Est autem hic sciendum quod accidental illud, quod contingit rei ex connexione sua cum alio super quod fundatur respectus eius ad illud, nihil est nisi motus aut dispositio aliqua acquisita ex motu.” Note that it is not clear from this text whether it is the subject of the accident or the accident itself that it is connected to something else. Given what Henry says in the same question as well as the text quoted below in the next note, he must mean that it is the subject that is related to something else.

32 Henry, however, thinks that one can apply the concept of action and passion to God. The catch is that when applied to God, actions and passions are not founded on motion or a disposition acquired through motion. Nevertheless, they still retain the aspects of relatedness that constitute the categories of action and passion in created beings. Ibid., 97: “Unde, si huiusmodi duo praediciamenta ad divina transferuntur, non manent nisi secundum commenem rationem puri respectus, secundum quem etiam denominatur agens omne in quantum agens est. […] Et sicut actio manet in Deo secundum rationem sui respectus, similiter et passio, absoluta omni ratione motus et pluralitatis distantis ab actu.”

33 Ibid., 96: “Motus enim ex eo quod est motus, essentialiter per se et primo respicit plura, quod nulli ali accidenti convenit, scilicet moventem a quo est, et mobile in quo est, terminum in quem, tempus sub quo est.” See also Henry of Ghent,
time, space, causation, etc., that is, about who does what and to whom. So it makes sense to categorize how things are in virtue of suffering changes or motions. This reason also throws light on how action and passion are constituted in cases in which there is no motion: we need to find an entity that is a part of something and that can be related to what moves and to what is moved.

Let us focus now on the aspects of relatedness that supervene on motion (or the disposition acquired through motion or the form that is caused) and that enter into the makeup of actions and passions. Actions are founded upon a motion or a disposition acquired through motion insofar as they are from something; passions are founded upon a motion or a disposition acquired through motion insofar as they are in something. The aspect of relatedness that Henry calls “from something else” (ab alio) is to what causes the motion or disposition, while the aspect of relatedness that Henry calls “in something else” (in alio) is to that in which the motion or the disposition is received. For example, in the case of a fire heating a pot, the action of heating is founded upon either the motion that occurs in the pot insofar as this motion is caused by fire or the form of heat insofar as this form is caused by the fire; the passion of being heated is founded upon the same motion insofar as it is received in the pot, or upon the same form of heat insofar as it is received in the pot.

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\textit{Quodl.} VII, q. 2 (Leuven 9: 30): “Quorum sex, sicilicet, actio, passio, quando, ubi, situs, habitus, non fundantur nisi super rem quantitatis, licet diversarum specierum quantitatis, propter quod sunt praedicamenta accidentium pure.” See also Henry of Ghent, \textit{Quodl.} XV, q. 5 (Leuven 20: 25–26): “De quibus [that is, the last six categories] idcirco dicit Boethius libro suo De Trinitate quod ‘mattime ex aliquo vel alieno adventu constare videntur’; cuiusmodi alienum est motus aut dispositio acquisita per motum. Motus enim aut dispositio acquisita per motum non convenit mobili nisi ex coniunctione eius cum movente et adventu illius. Nec e converso convenit moventi nisi ex coniunctione eius cum mobili et adventu illius. […] Et quia in his sex praedicamentis res illa super quam fundantur, in quantum super illam fundantur, est ad alium se habere, ut secundum hoc in his sex praedicamentis res illa super quam fundantur, in quantum super illam fundantur, circa se rationem respectus quodam modo includit quasi materialem ad respectus in quibus consistit ratio illorum sex praedicamentorum.” There are two important points to be made about this passage. First, Henry states that motion or the disposition acquired through motion happens to something because of the connection or the conjunction between the subject of the motion (or disposition) and something else. Second, from this passage it seems as if motion is in the category of quantity. However, it is unclear to me whether Henry indeed considers motion to pertain to this category. I have found only one passage where after he rejects the possibility that motion is in the category of passion, he mentions an opinion according to which motion pertains to the category of quantity. See Henry of Ghent, \textit{SQO}, art. 59, q. 2 (1520 Badius 2: fols. 142vM–143r).

\textsuperscript{34} See Henry of Ghent, \textit{SQO}, art. 32, q. 5 (Leuven 27: 96): “Circa distinctionem igitur actionis et passionis scidentum quod ambo accidentales respectus dicitur in creaturis, quia fundantur in motu, et hoc uno et eodem numero, et distinguuntur secundum solos respectus qui sunt esse ab alio et in alium.” Although in this text Henry uses the expression ‘in alium’ (onto something), immediately afterwards he uses the traditional expression ‘in passo.’ Ibid. The expression with Accusative, however, is better suited to draw attention to the peculiar status of passions: passions are not simply in something, but are in something because they come to it from something else.

\textsuperscript{35} Note that in explaining the nature of action and passion in this way, Henry does not depart from Aristotle’s treatment of these concepts in \textit{Physics} III.3. Recall that at least according to some medieval interpretations, Aristotle maintains that actions and passions are the same motion but differ in account or ratio. Henry’s view about the nature of action and passion agrees with this interpretation: what distinguishes actions from passions is their different aspects of relatedness, ‘from something else’ and ‘in something else’.
If this interpretation of Henry’s view is correct, then the extrinsically advenient character of actions and passions seem to depend on considering the item that enters their constitution relationally. Recall the example of the heated pot: if heat is considered simply as a quality of the pot, there is no reason to talk about the action of heating the pot. To identify an action or a passion, we need to consider heat in connection to what brings it about and where it is received. But doesn’t this make the actions and passions dependent on how an intellect considers heat? We do not want this to happen, since actions and passions cannot be creations of our intellect. To avoid this issue, the emergence of actions and passions needs to be explained in a way that leaves us out of the explanation. If we do that, however, we might end up with actions and passions being intrinsically advenient. According to Henry’s view about principiation, actions and passions should be related to the supposita involved in principiation. But since at the end of the principiation, there is a product, a suppositum informed by a form, then actions and passions would arise necessarily at the end of the whole causal interaction, after all important things have already happened. And so they would arise intrinsically on the product and the producer. This is Scotus’s objection against a way of understanding actions and passions like Henry’s.36

It is true that for Henry, the final product of an interaction is relevant for explaining how actions and passions supervene. A causal occurrence ends with a suppositum informed by a form: when the fire heats the pot, what is caused or principiated in the end, is a heated pot, not heat. But as soon as there is a final product, the aspects of relatedness that constitutes action and passion supervene on the form that constitutes the product. Thus, for Henry, there is action and passion only when a form is a constitutive part of a product: because the product requires a producer and vice versa, the form that is a partial constituent of the product becomes the foundation of two aspects of relatedness to two entities, to what brings about the form and what receives it.

These considerations suggest a reply to Scotus’s point. Note that Henry does not say that the aspects of relatedness are extrinsically advenient, but that actions and passions are. This means that actions and passions are extrinsically advenient because they require for their constitution not simply

36 See Scotus, Ord. IV, d. 13, q. 1, n. 65 (Vat. 12: 455–56): “Sed ille respectus ab alio, qui formaliter importatur per nomen ‘actionis’ in ista quinta significacione, adhuc videtur aequivoco intelligi: vel scilicet ‘ab’ ut a producente vel inducente, vel ‘ab’ ut a transmutante. Secundum primum intellectum pertinet ad genus ‘relationis’ sicut et ipsa productio vel inductio passiva, ut prius dictum est, secundum ultimum intellectum, pertinet ad genus ‘passionis’, sicut et transmutatio passiva.” The case that is an objection against Henry is the one in which the aspect is related to the producer. See the section below on Scotus’s view that action is different from production: for Scotus, action is extrinsically advenient, while production is intrinsically advenient.
a form and what brings it about or what receives it, but a form that is part of a product in a causal interaction. Once this form is a part of the product, then, because of the relation of the product to the producer and of the relation of the producer to product, the aspects of relatedness ‘from something’ and ‘in something’ arise on the form towards the suitable entities. Thus, to Scotus’s point that, for example, an action is intrinsically advenient if the aspect of relatedness ‘from something’ supervenes on the product to the producer, Henry would reply in the following manner: first, the aspect does not supervene on the product, but on the form that enters into the constitution of the product; second, the aspect supervenes on the form insofar as this form enters into the constitution of the product, that is, only when there is a more fundamental relation, namely that between the producer and the product. Third, because of this relation, the modes of being of the heat in the heated pot and the heat in the hot pot are different: for example, in the heated pot, the aspect of relatedness ‘in something’ arises, which in turn is a necessary condition for the aspect of relatedness ‘from something’ to arise.

If this interpretation is correct, Henry’s view is that there is no action without a passion, and neither of them exists without a product. Unless we have a heated pot, there is no passion of being heated: once there is a heated pot, the aspect of relatedness ‘in something’ arises on heat because the way heat is related to the pot is special: this aspect arises in the presence of fire, which is the cause of the heated pot. Once this aspect of relatedness ‘in something’ arises, another aspect of relatedness ‘from something’ arises on heat towards the fire. These aspects of relatedness do not arise simply because of our intellectual considerations, nor do they arise necessarily on the form.

When we talk about actions and passions, we also talk about agents and patients. What are these entities? For Henry, agents and patients are named from actions and passions.37 More precisely, agents and patients are the entities to which the aspects of relatedness that constitute actions and passions are directed, for an action is from an agent and a passion is in a patient. This means that the aspect of relatedness ‘from something’ is founded upon motion or a disposition acquired through motion, and it is toward the agent; while passion is founded upon the same motion or disposition and it is toward a patient. What kind of entities are agents and patients? Recall that for Henry, the agent is not the power to bring about the action but the bearer of the power, the whole suppositum, because actions (and passions) are of the suppositas; the patient is also not the power to receive the action, but

37 See Henry of Ghent, SQO, art. 32, q. 5 (Leuven 27: 96–97): “Et quia ‘motus’ super quem ambo huiusmodi respectus fundantur, ‘solum est in passo’, secundum Philosophum III° Physicorum, ideo ambo accidentalitatem suam habent ab eo quod est in passo, et denominatur agens ab eo quod est accidentale in alio, non in ipso agente.” Presumably the patient is denominated from the entity in which motion is received.
8.2.3. Principiation and Self-Motion

Self-motion is a case of principiation or production. Recall that in chapter three I analyzed Henry’s view of principiation. At the core of his view, there are several claims. First, any principiation ends with a product; in created beings this product is a *suppositum* informed by a form. The heating of a pot is a case of principiation, which ends with a heated pot, the product. Second, in bringing about the product, principles interact. These principles are *supposita* that are related to each other, with one *suppositum* being the producer or the active principle, and the other the passive principle, which principiates the product by being a co-part with a form of what is produced. For example, in the case of the heating of a pot, the principles are the fire and the pot: these two principles are *supposita* that can exist by themselves. Third, these principles must be distinguished from that on account of which they act (the *ratio agendi*) or suffer (the *ratio patiendi*)—that on account of which something acts is something formal in the *suppositum*. Indeed, the fire acts in virtue of being hot, while the pot can be heated in virtue of being made of a material that can be heated. Fourth, although principles play a fundamental role in principiation, they play this role insofar as they have the relevant powers—the powers are also part of that on account of which the *supposita* principiate. Fifth, these powers account for the different ways the two *supposita* or principles principiate the product: a principle having an active power principiates by bringing about a form; a principle having a passive power principiates the product as something pertaining to the product, by receiving a form. In the case of the heating of the pot, the fire’s active power enables the fire to bring about heat in the pot, while the pot’s passive power allows it to receive the heat and constitute together with it the heated pot, the product of this causal interaction.

To this, we can add a sixth claim, namely, that in some cases of principiation, there is no producer and no product without the presence of a new entity, an entity that is different from the producer and the product. For example, in the case of the heating of the pot, without the presence of the form of heat, fire does not become a producer of the heated pot, nor does the heated pot become the product of the fire’s action. This sixth claim applies only to those cases of principiation in which we deal with created producers and products. In God, however, although there is principiation, no
new entity, other than the producer and the product, is required.38

In what follows, I will discuss how these claims about principiation apply to the self-motion of the will. Then I will discuss how Henry’s claims about principiation explain the co-presence of distinct relations in the same one thing. At the end of this section, I will return to the issue of the relation between principiation, action and passion, and agents and patients.

When Henry says that the will is a self-mover, he means that a human being, insofar as she has a will, can move herself to willing something. However, for a human being to be constituted as a producer and a product, or as the active and the passive principle of her own volitions, Henry requires three kinds of items: (a) an essence, namely, the immaterial soul,39 (b) two opposite relations having as a foundation the soul, namely, the relations between being active and passive, and (c) a volition.

The presence of the act of volition makes the difference between the case in which the will merely has active and passive powers and the case in which the will is an active and a passive principle, that is, it is manifesting its powers. The will is not constituted as a producer and a product, nor does it have an action and a passion, and in general, it is not an active and a passive principle, unless something different from itself is brought about.40 The presence of the act of volition is the last necessary condition for the supervenience of the relations between the will as active and passive. Only

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38 In *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2, Henry contrasts the principiation of the act of volition with that of the Son in the Trinity. According to Catholic dogma, there are three persons in the God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son is said to be born from the Father. Henry, like many other medieval authors, understands the production of the Son as a case of principiation: the Father produces the Son, so the Father is an agent, while the Son is the product of the Father, or the patient. Henry explains that in God, the producer and the product are constituted only by the essence and two real opposite relations—what is principiated is not something composed of a *suppositum* and something really distinct from God. See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 560rD).

39 Henry does not state what the essence is, since he is talking about the self-motion of the will and not the self-motion of a human being. However, given how Henry’s discussion is structured in *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2, it seems that the essence cannot be the whole human being, but only the human soul. This is so because Henry discusses the constitution of the agent and patient in non-self-movers. In this discussion, matter plays an important role. There is no reference to matter or body in the discussion of the self-motion of the will.

40 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 560rE): “In creaturis autem cum est idem fundamentum duarum relationum non constitutium relata, hoc non est nisi per aliquid differens re a fundamento quod educitur de ipso […] et activum in talibus per hoc est activum quod virtute continet actum ad quem passivum est in potentia, et secundum hoc est in actu respectu passivi et passivum per hoc quod est passivum quia de ipso nata est educi forma qua sit in actu formali, quam ex se sola virtute continebat agens. […] Et producit ut est activum illa virtute illum actum formalem et producitur ut est passivum de isto ut est in potentia et carens forma illius actus, ut secundum hoc praeter rationes respectuum in relatis cum fundamento secundum quas solummodo ratione actionis et passionis habet esse productio in divinis a qua denominatur producens et productum, habet ista productio in creaturis a qua denominatur producens et productum aliquid plus, secundum quod habet plus de ratione actionis et passionis, et est illud plus actus ipse qui est volitio, aliquid scilicet in re differens a fundamento, a qua volitione potest dici voliciens et actum potest dici volicitum, […] et est relatio realis ex utraque parte inter voliciens et volicitum, sicut inter actum et agens, movens et motum.”
in the presence of the act of volition, is the will constituted as a producer and a product. Note, however, that the act of volition is not the only entity necessary for the will to become such a producer and product. The features that are required to explain the principiation of an act of volition, that is, to explain how the will becomes a producer and a product, are summarized in the following table:

| For the constitution of the **producer** (the producer is the will or the human being), the following items are required: |
| For the constitution of the **product** (the product is the will informed by the act of willing or the willing will or a human being having an act of willing), the following items are required: |
| --- | --- |
| The suppositum (which is the soul having an active will); That on account of which the suppositum acts, that is the essence of the soul insofar as it has a will (more precisely, insofar as the will virtually contains its act); A relation from the producer to what is produced or the relation of active principiation (what Henry calls relatio a). | The suppositum (which is the soul having a passive will); That on account of which a willing will is produced, which is the soul insofar as it has a will able to receive its act; A volition; A relation from what is produced (the willing will) to the producer or the relation of passive principiation (what Henry calls relatio ab). |

The relations $a$ and $ab$ (the relation between producer and product, and between product and producer) are not to be confused with the active and passive powers of the will. The active and the passive powers of the will are part of that on account of which the will acts or receives a volition, and they are relations to volitions. However, the relations of active and passive principiation (the relations $a$ and $ab$) are between the producer and the product. The product is a suppositum informed by a form, in this case the soul informed by the volition or the will informed by a volition—it is not the volition alone. The producer is the will or the soul insofar as it has a power to cause its own volitions. Nor should the relations of active and passive principiation be confused with the action and the passion of the will. The action and the passion of the will are relations having as a foundation the act of willing, while the relations between the producer and the product are relations having as foundation the will.

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41 Ibid.: “Et sic in ista productione ex parte producentis est suppositum quod est per se voliciens, id est informans scissum volitionis forma, sicut calefaciens est informans alium forma caloris, vel movens est informans alius forma motus, et in ipso est vis volitiva virtute continens forma volitionis sicut sol calefaciens virtute continet forma caloris vel gravitas movens formam motus, vel vis in semine formam generandam ex isto, et per hoc vis volitiva ipsa est forma et potentia activa qua producit et nota volitionis quae est a quo, similibet est in isto quoniam a voliciente est volitum. Et pro isto supposito accipitur volicitas quando est quosquis unum moveat se ad actum volendi et est ratio movendi in eo dicta virtus, ut forma qua agit, quae non nisi ratione differt ab ea. Et sic ex parte producentis hic et in divinis si haec voluntas dicatur producere non est differentia, nisi quod relatio ibi constituit suppositum, hic nequaquam. Ex parte autem producti hic sunt duo re differentia, sicut ipsa voluntas ut est in potentia passiva de qua producitur ipsa volitio, et cum hoc ipsa volitio quae producitur, et cum hoc respectus qui est ab: volitum enim informatum volitionis actu est a voliciense.”
How is Aristotle’s argument that nothing can have at the same time an action and a passion translated into Henry’s terms of producer and product, and active and passive principles? Aristotle’s argument should take the following form:

(1) Active and passive principles are constituted by *supposita* together with really distinct relations;

(2) A self-mover is at the same time an active and a passive principle.

(3) Really distinct relations require distinct foundations and *termini*.

(4) Since a genuine self-mover is one thing, it could not be at the same time the foundation of such distinct relations.

Therefore, no self-mover can be an active and a passive principle at the same time.\(^2\)

Henry agrees with all the premises of the argument, but not with the conclusion. He acknowledges that the relations of principiation (*a* and *ab*) are real relations. He also acknowledges that really distinct relations require distinct foundations and *termini*. But he does not agree that from premise (3) it follows that a self-mover cannot be the foundation of these distinct relations. The reason is that the conclusion does not rely on premise (3) but on premise (3)\(^\prime\): “Really distinct relations require *really* distinct foundations and *termini*.”

What is the rationale for premise (3)\(^\prime\)? In *Quodl.* VII, q. 6,\(^3\) Godfrey of Fontaines explains it by referring to the nature of relations. It is in the nature of relations to be toward something else (*ad aliendum*), that is, relations always presuppose a distinction between *relata*. But *relata* can differ only in two ways: rationally and really. If the *relata* are only rationally distinguished, the relation between them is only a rational relation, such as the relation of identity. If the *relata* are really distinct, the relation is

\(^2\) Ibid., fol. 560vG: “aliqui arguunt sic: de ratione relationis est quod sit ad alium, et quod per ipsum aliquid referetur ad alium. Relatio enim secundum quod est relatio est habitudo ad alium et de sui ratione distinctionem et extremorum relationum et ipsorum fundamentorum requiritur. […] Sed relationes activi et passivi sunt mutuo reales adinvicem. Ergo exigunt extremam per eas relata, et similiter fundamenta distincta adinvicem secundum rem. Unde in divinis ubi activum et passivum fundantur super eandem rem, licet non habeat distincta fundamenta realiter, habent tamen distincta extrema personaliter, ergo in creaturis ubi multo magis differunt, nullo modo possunt habere idem extremum secundum rem, immo necessario exigunt secundum rem extremam distinctam et cum hoc etiam fundamenta diversa realiter.

\(^3\) See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VII, q. 6 (PhB 3: 337) Cum ergo sit duplex genus relationum: sunt enim quaedam relationes secundum rem et quaedam secundum rationem. Quando autem est relatio secundum rationem ex utraque parte sicut contingit in relatione qua idem referetur ad se ipsum relatione identitatis, oportet quod sit distinctio saltem secundum rationem relatorum; et si tollatur distinctio secundum rationem relatorum, tollitur secundum rationem ipsarum relationum; ergo similiter quando est relatio secundum rem, ex utraque parte oportet quod sit realis distinctio relatorum ad invicum; et si tollitur realis distinctio relatorum, tollitur necessario realis distinctio relationum. In this question, Godfrey discusses precisely the problem of whether one thing can be the foundation of two distinct real relations.
Henry rejects premise (3'), but he acknowledges that the relata must be distinct. This means that he agrees with Godfrey that relations require a distinction between their relata, but he rejects Godfrey’s criterion for distinguishing real and rational relations. In *SQO*, art. 62, q. 4, Henry explains that what makes relations real is that such relations “have being and are caused totally and completely from something that really and naturally has being in the subject or in the relatum on which the relation is founded.” So what makes a relation real is its foundation alone. It is not a requirement for the reality of a relation that its terminus be also really distinct from the foundation. On the other hand, what makes relations rational is that such relations “have being and are caused totally or at least completely from the consideration of reason.” By drawing the distinction between rational and real relations in this way, Henry then argues that the relations of principiation in a self-mover are between relata that are distinct, without these relata being really distinct. More precisely, in a self-mover, the relations of principiation are between two distinct relata: the self-mover insofar as it is a producer and the self-mover insofar as it is a product.

What distinguishes the self-mover insofar as it is a producer from the self-mover insofar as it is a product is the form that is a constitutive part of the product. In the case of the self-motion of the will, this entity that allows the will to play the role of a producer and product is the act of volition. An immaterial self-mover such as the will can become the foundation of the relations of being active and passive, that is, of the two relations of production $a$ and $ab$, because it has the relevant active and passive powers to bring about a volition; but such self-mover is the foundation for these relations of being active and passive only when an accidental form (a volition for example) is received in the will. Thus, the act of volition is not only the ground for the supervenience of relations of principiation, but also the foundation for the two aspects of relatedness that constitute action and passion, the aspects

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44 See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 561rH): “Bene ergo concedendum est illud quod narratur in principio ad fundationem argumenti, videlicet quod ad ratione relationis est quod sit ad alium et quod requiritur distinctione extreorum. […] Sed ex illo non sequitur conclusum scilicet quod plures relatio secundum rem mutuo exigant plura extremo et plura fundamenta secundum rem.”


46 Ibid.: “Propter quod talis relatio dicitur realis realitate naturae.”

47 Ibid.: “Appellantur autem relationes secundum rationem illae quae totaliter aut saltum completive habent esse et causari a consideratione rationis […] non autem ab eo quod naturaliter et realiter habent esse in subiecto relato.”
of relatedness ‘from something’ and ‘in something’. However, while actions and passions require the act of volition as one of their relata (the act of volition is from the agent and in the patient), the relations of production are between the producer and the product, two supposita. This is not surprising, for the act of volition is a constitutive part of the product, not the product itself: the product is the willing will, that is, the will informed by an act of volition.

Given this view, in self-motion the relata are really the same, but also different. The suppositum that is the foundation of the relation of active principiation is really the same as the suppositum that is the foundation of the relation of passive principiation—it is the self-mover itself. But although the same, there is, of course, a difference between them. A human being having a will is constituted as a producer when her soul insofar as it has an active volitional power to produce an act is related to her soul as it is informed by an act of volition. This means that the suppositum at the beginning of the principiation is considered in a certain way, but in another way at the end. The suppositum that is the foundation of the relation of active principiation is the soul insofar as it has an active power of willing; the terminus of the relation is the soul not only insofar as it has a passive power but also insofar as it is informed by the act of volition. The suppositum that is the foundation of the relation of passive principiation is the soul insofar as it has a passive power and is already informed by the act of will; the terminus is the soul insofar as it has an active power. The two supposita are really the same substance, but the suppositum that constitutes the product is a substance that is considered not only insofar as it has a certain power but also insofar as it supports an accident, something outside the suppositum, for example, the act of volition.

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48 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 561rG): “sic in activis et passivis sine vero motu relata non requirunt aliam distinctionem inquantum sunt relata per se, nisi ipsas relationes, sed in voluntate ipsa relata per accidentem, ut est ipsa voluntas, ut est activa per potentia activa et ut est passiva per potentia passiva, illas relationes secundum actum non potest habere in se nisi per alid re, scilicet per volitionem, sicut in activis et passivis vero motu non possunt haberi indifferens re absoluta ille relationes nisi per motum. […] et sic in creaturis activum et passivum quae fundantur super eandem rem licet non habent distincta fundamenta realiter, habent tamen distincta extremae accidentaliter, scilicet re relata accidental fundamento.”

49 Ibid.: “et sic quod ad huiusmodi relationes non est differentia in deo et in voluntate nisi quod in deo fundetur super idem re non per alid diversae relations reales, et quod cum fundamento constitunt diversas personas, in voluntate nequaquam et quod in deo non per alid re fundatur super idem, in voluntate autem non nisi per alid re. Secundum praedicta et quod ad hoc solum et quod ad hoc quod iste relationes accidunt fundamento, et iste non plus differenti extremae relationis in voluntate quam in deo et propter hoc in deo sunt constitutive personarum et non in voluntate. Et sic in creaturis activum et passivum quae fundantur super eandem rem licet non habent distincta fundamenta realiter, habent tamen distincta extremae accidentaliter, scilicet re relata accidental fundamento.” Henry contrasts the case of the will with that of God: in God, the essence does not receive anything from outside and thus it is related to itself as itself. Ibid., fol. 562rP: “secundum hoc ergo dico in proposito quod licet in agente et passo ex parte voluntatis non sit aliquarum differentiarum substantialium pluralitas, quia non sunt nisi una simplex essentia et sic accessit ei secundum tempus cuius accessione coepit esse agens, eo quod accidentalis est ei productio eius quod est informatum volitione, quod est unum per
In the end, Henry’s answer is that the will is a producer and a product at the same time, but only because the *relata* of these relations are somehow distinct. So, in *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2 he concludes:

[Text 2] In creatures, however, for example in the will, the relation of producer and produced is never as if from the same to the same.  

At the core of Henry’s reply to how a created thing can be the foundation of the distinct relations of being passive and active is the view that this is not possible unless one considers another entity that is external and so really distinct from the thing itself. As Henry says: “the will insofar as it is active with respect to its volition is related to itself as it is passive and receptive of that act, and this through the act of volition.” This entity is not one of the *relata* of the relations of being active and passive (the *relata* are the self-mover insofar as it is a producer and a product), but it is required for the supervenience of these relations: without the act of the will, the will is neither a producer nor a product.

Self-motion is a case of principiation, with the same one *suppositum* playing the role of two principles, namely, active and passive: the same one thing is a producer and a product. As a producer, it brings about a form; this form is received in the self-mover so that a product is principiated. From this form, the action and the passion of the self-mover are identified. But what are the agent and the patient in self-motion? In the self-motion of the will, the will is the agent insofar as it is active with respect to its volition and it is the patient insofar as it is that in which the act of volition is received. The relations between the will as an agent and the will as a patient, in the end, are the same as the relations between the will as producer and the will as product. Both of them require for their supervenience the existence of the act of volition; the difference seems to be that while the terms

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accidens compositum ex voluntate ut est vis passiva et volitione et sic id quo voluntas ut agens ex se productum suum produxit, est aliquid aliud quam substantia eius, scilicet ipsa volitio, inquantum ipsum per se productum est compositum ex substantia eius et volitione.” Note that Henry also remarks that becoming a producer and a product is accidental to the will. For why this remark is relevant see note 78 below.

50 Ibid.: “In creaturis autem puta in voluntate nequaquam est relatio producentis et producti sicut eiusmodem ad seipsum.”

51 Ibid., fol. 561v: “voluntas ut est activa actus volitionis refertur ad seipsam ut est passiva et receptiva illius et hoc mediate actu volitionis.”

52 Ibid., fol. 562rO: “sed aliter secundum quod est agens et aliter secundum quod est patiens, puta voluntato volitio, cui secundum quod est agens sive volifaciens accidit quod volitio est ab ipsa; secundum vero quod passsum, accidit ei quod volito fit in ipsa et de ipsa.”

53 Ibid., fol. 562rP: “Licet in agente et passo ex parte voluntatis non sit aliquarum differentiarum substantialium pluralitas, quia non sunt nisi una simplex essentia, et sic accessit ei secundum tempus cuius accessione coepit esse agens, eo quod accidentalis est ei productio eius quod est informatum volitione, quod est unum per accidens compositum ex voluntate ut est vis passiva et volitione. Et sic id in quo voluntas ut agens ex se productum suum produxit est aliquid aliud quam substantia eius, […] inquantum ipsum per se productum est compositum ex substantia eius et volitione.”
‘product’ and ‘producer’ stress the importance of the final or \textit{per se} product of a causal interaction, the heated hot thing or the willing will, the terms ‘agent’ and ‘patient’ stress the importance of a constitutive part of final product, namely the heat or the act of volition.

Although Henry has a reply to the issue of how the really distinct relations of being an agent and a patient supervene on the same one thing, does he have an account of how actions and passions are to be defined if self-motion is possible? This is the issue at the core of Aristotle’s first argument from \textit{Physica} VIII.5, 257b2–6. Indeed, if self-motion were possible, the agent would be the same as the patient, but then actions and passions would be constituted by aspects of relatedness founded on the same foundation to the same entity. For example, both the action and the passion of the will would be constituted by the act of the will and different aspects of relatedness to the will. One might think that the difference between action and passion lies in the nature of the aspects of relatedness. However, it is more probable that the difference between action and passion lies in the different powers in virtue of which the self-mover is an agent or patient. The action of the will is constituted by the act of the volition and an aspect of relatedness to the will insofar as it is an agent, that is, insofar as it has an active power; the passion of the will is constituted by the act of volition and an aspect of relatedness to the will insofar as it is a patient. Probably, it is because of these distinct powers that one aspect of relatedness is ‘from the will’ and another is ‘in the will’.

To summarize, in causal interactions, the distinct relations of being active and passive arise on \textit{supposita}, because the \textit{supposita} are the main actors in these interactions. But in created beings,\textsuperscript{54} for

\textsuperscript{54} Note that the will is an immaterial self-mover. Principiation in material things is more complex than principiation in the will. As in the will, material agents and patients are not constituted unless there is a new form brought about. Second, material agents and patients require for their constitution motion as a condition \textit{sine qua non}. Henry takes this to be a sign of their imperfect nature. Third, matter plays a role in the constitution of both the agent and the patient. Thus, besides the \textit{supposita}, the \textit{ratio agendi}, and the relations of principiation, there is also matter from the part of both the producer and the product. See ibid., fol. 560rF–v: “In creaturis autem cum alius et alius est fundamentum huius duplicis relationis, atque extra agentem est passum et quod procedit ab ipso, ut patet in calefactione: hoc non solum est per alienius differentis a fundamento productionem de ipso fundamento, cuiusmodi est calor in calefacto; sed etiam per motum aut transmutationem in eodem fundamento a calefaciente, quod etiam secundum rem differt a calefacto, ut in producente scilicet calefaciente sit considerare suppositum agens et formam qua agit et materiam in qua subsistit, quae sunt duo differentia secundum rem in ipso et cum hoc est ibi tertium scilicet nota relationis a qua, scilicet a calefaciente est calefactum. In producendo autem scilicet in calefacto consideratur tria secundum rem differentia. Actum enim est suppositum quod patitur suariter, sed per motum quo forma quaest est in materia educenda est, scilicet frigiditas, et inducenda forma contraria, scilicet caliditas, propter quod ibi necessarius est motus. Et sic tria sunt secundum rem differentia in calefacto, scilicet materia, et motus per quem debet una forma amoveri, et forma alia introducta per motum et quatum est nota relationis qua actu scilicet calefactum est ab agente calefaciente et a forma inducta in materia denominatur motus, puta un calore calefacto, et a motu sic denominato denominatur agens et actum.” It is a question why Henry mentions matter when he discusses what constitutes a \textit{suppositum} as an agent. My suggestion is that Henry needs matter to explain the determination of powers. Recall that for Henry powers are determinations made by God of an essence to different acts. God determines an essence to kind of acts, and further to more specific acts by uniting that essence with another essence.
these relations to arise, an item distinct from the *supposita* needs to be present: something is an active principle by bringing about this item and it is a passive principle by receiving it. The question that Henry addresses in *Quodl.* XIV, q. 2 is how it is possible that in self-motion two distinct real relations of being active and being passive supervene on the same foundation. His answer is that the self-mover on which the relations supervene must be in some way composed. Indeed, the self-mover has active and passive powers for a certain feature (for example, the act of volition). But the relations of being active and passive do not supervene simply because of these powers: the feature for which the powers are, namely the act of volition, must also be present. However, because of the presence of this feature, which is distinct from the self-mover Henry argues, in the end, that in created self-movers, there is no perfect self-motion—a self-mover is not related to itself unless through this feature that is really distinct from it.

### 8.3. Scotus on Self-Motion and Distinct Relations

For Henry, a self-mover can be the foundation of the distinct relations of being active and passive only because a new item becomes a constitutive part of what is produced. Recall that the distinct relations of being active and being passive supervene on the will in the presence of the act of volition but only because the will receives this act, together with which it constitutes the willing will, the product of the self-motion of the will. Scotus's solution to how a self-mover can be the foundation for the distinct relations of being active and passive questions precisely the role of the new item in the emergence of the relations. In his solution, he also maintains Henry's insight that the new item is a necessary condition for the emergence of the relations of being active and being passive; but although he agrees that the new item is required for the constitution of the product, he does not equate being a product with being the patient.\(^{55}\) Thus, the major innovation of Scotus's view is to decouple production from agency: in agency, things have actions and passions; but production is different from agency, for in production we have producers and products. In the end, he would argue that a self-

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\(^{55}\) See Scotus, *QSM* IX, q. 14, n. 107 (OPh 4: 667): “Ad tertium principale pro opinione prima de relationibus oppositis, dicendum quod, sicut dictum est in solutione 3 questionis huius IX art. 2: alia est relatio producentis ad productum, alia principii activi ad principium passivum, quae ambo sunt principia respectu eiusdem producti.”
mover can be the foundation for the distinct relations of being active and passive, that is, it can have at the same time an action and a passion with respect to the same feature, something that Aristotle denied; but no created self-mover can be at the same time the foundation for the distinct relations of being a producer and product.

These are the claims for which I will argue in the following subsections. To explain Scotus's view, we need, of course, to discuss what he means by action and passion, for Scotus understands action and passion in a very different way than Henry does.

Before doing this, let me make some remarks about production, principiation and agency. In chapter 3, I spoke about principiation, causes and causal powers. I showed that Henry distinguishes principles from causal powers and thinks that principles are the bedrock of causal interactions—he understands principles as *supposita*. Scotus, on the other hand, equates principles and causal powers and does not understand them as *supposita*. For him, forms, that is, parts of *supposita* not only are have powers, but also are principles, and thus, they act and are acted upon. But these are not the only important differences between Henry and Scotus. Just as important are their views about what happens at the end of a causal interaction between principles, or what happens at the end of principiation. For Henry, principiation ends with a principle being informed by a form; recall the heated pot. This makes sense: since principles are *supposita*, that is, since causal interactions are between *supposita*, of course a causal interaction needs to end with something happening to such a *suppositum*. If a *suppositum* is not changed at the end, how can we say that there was an instance of causation? This is the reason for Henry’s ‘peculiar’ understanding of a patient and product as a *suppositum* informed by a form (our heated pot). Since Scotus has a different understanding of the actors in principiation—they are forms, not *supposita*—he does not have the same strong incentive to posit that a causal interaction ends with something being done to a *suppositum*. Thus, he does not simply equate the relation between a producer and the product with the relation between what principiates and its *principiatum*, for what is produced is not always the same as what is principiated. There are many items that can be principiated but cannot be produced. For example, in alteration a form is principiated in a composite; in generation a form that is educed from the potency of matter is also principiated. The whole composite can be said to be principiated; yet, production refers primarily to the bringing about of a whole thing or substance by another whole thing, for in production both the producer and the
product are whole complete things. Moreover, the actors in production are *supposita*, but as we will see later, for Scotus, the main actors in principiation are not necessarily *supposita*. Given these reasons, it is important in what follows to keep in mind these distinctions, especially when I discuss action.

Scotus advances three solutions to the question of how the same one thing can be the foundation of mutual opposed relations. Each solution, however, addresses both the case of mutual relations between producer and product and, respectively, that of active and passive principles. Here I will discuss only the first one. This solution is not only more developed than the others, but it seems to be also fully endorsed by Scotus, for he does not express any second thoughts about it (as he does with the remaining two). Moreover, as we will see, this solution fits with other views of Scotus.

Scotus agrees that one and the same thing can be the foundation of distinct relations between an active and passive principle. His reply deals with two issues: what it means for something to be at the same time a producer and a product, and how something can have an action and a passion at the same time.

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57 As I will argue below, Scotus analyzes action in relation to principles and principiation, not production. This interpretation of Scotus goes against the interpretation of Richard Cross, who takes production to be related to action. For example, he says “it is production which is properly located in the category of action.” See Cross, “Some Varieties of Semantic Externalism,” 278. See also note 86 below.

58 For the second and third solutions see Scotus, *QSM* IX, q. 14, nn. 108–109 (OPh 4: 668). At the core of the second solution, there is a distinction between two kinds of relations. On the one hand, there are those relations that are simply opposed and they cannot be in the same one thing. On the other hand, there are some relations that are disparate. Russell Friedman succinctly explains what these disparate relations are: “In contrast to opposed relations, disparate relations are not mutually implicative, that is to say, the existence of one disparate relation does not necessarily imply the existence of another (just as, e.g., one thing’s similarity to another thing does not imply its equality with that other thing).” See Russell L. Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 41. Disparate relations are used by Franciscan authors to explain the source of the distinction between the emanations of persons in the Trinity. Scotus holds that the appeal to disparate relations cannot explain how the same one thing is the foundation of opposite real relations. See Scotus, *QSM* IX, q. 14, n. 108 (OPh 4: 668): “Sed haec responsio duo dubia supponit: unum, quod illae disparatae sunt prioribus oppositis; aliud, quod talis prioritas aliqua facit ad hoc ut oppositae possint inesse. Si enim ex se repugnarent, etiam disparatae illae illum repugnantium non tollerent.” The third solution starts with the claim that an unlimited nature is the foundation for opposite relations. Here Scotus refers to how the divine essence is the foundation of the relation between producer and produced. If this is possible, then, the solution continues, this unlimited nature can also be the foundation of opposite relations such as between active and passive potencies, between which there seems to be even less repugnance than between the mutual relations of producer and produced. Given that this can happen in an unlimited nature, if it happens in a limited one, it shows that a limited nature is in a certain way unlimited, since it is able to move itself. This solution is not criticized by Scotus, but there is no need for this. The critique would be obvious: saying that opposite relations are possible in God because of His unlimited nature is not a convincing explanation—one needs to show why the unlimited nature of the divine essence can be such a foundation.
8.3.1. A Self-Mover as a Producer and a Product

If self-motion were self-production, then the same one thing would be the foundation of the mutual relations between producer and product at the same time and in the same respect; but this seems impossible. Scotus’s reply is more nuanced due to his theological commitments. First, he states that no supposit can be the foundation of the mutual relations of producer and product. That is, no supposit can be its producer and its product at the same time. Second, he claims that no limited nature can be the foundation of such mutual relations. These claims allow for the possibility of an unlimited nature to be at the same time a producer and the product. Since I am not interested in the divine case, I will limit myself in what follows to why self-production cannot happen in limited natures. To deal with this case, we first need to know how supposits are distinct from natures, and more precisely, how supposits and natures are relevant for production.

In Quodl. IX, Scotus defines a suppositum as follows:

[Text 3] A per se being can mean three things. First, it can designate something which exists in isolation or apart from a subject. […] Second, a per se being is contrasted with one that exists in another, and in this sense it is a thing which neither actually inheres in another nor has an aptitude to do so. […] Third, a per se being may refer to one which has its ultimate actuality (actualitatem ultimam), so that it is simply unable to be ordered per se to some further act (actus) beyond that which it has, where the further actualization would belong to it per se, either in a primary or in a participated sense. A per se being in this sense is called a suppositum, and if it is of an intellectual nature, it is called a person.

Suppositum is a term that comes from theological discussions, especially those related to the Trinity and the Incarnation, where it is usually understood as “any ultimate subject of characteristics.”[Text 3] explains how a suppositum is such an ultimate subject. A suppositum is a per se being, that is, an individual that can exist separated from others. Moreover, such a being does neither have an aptitude for inhering

59 See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 14, n. 107 (OPh 4: 667): “Primae duae relationes numquam insunt eidem supposito; ‘nihil enim se ipsum gignit’; nam tunc quando non esset, esset. Sed nec fundantur istae in aliquia una natura limitata, quia natura limitata numquam se totam non divisam communicat producto supposito.”

60 See Scotus. Quodl., q. 9, n. 7 (Allunts and Wolter: 218-20).

in something else (as accidents have) nor can it be ordered to a more complete being. For example, a substantial form, although it can exist by itself, is not a suppositum because it is *per se* ordered to something else, for example, to the composite that it forms with matter.\(^{62}\) Similarly, the separated soul is not a suppositum because it can be ordered to a further being.\(^{63}\)

A suppositum is not simply an individual or a singular. To Scotus, an individual is something that is not further divisible into subjective parts, that is, into parts that are the same as the whole.\(^{64}\) For example, a species such as human being is further divisible into Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, each part being the same as the whole, for each part is an instance of the whole. Thus, an individual is something that cannot be further divided into instances of itself. But not all individuals are supposita, for example, accidents can be individuals or singulars, but not supposita. Indeed, Scotus abides by one important claim: “to any ‘by which’ (*quo*) corresponds its proper ‘that’ or ‘who’.”\(^{65}\) Since forms are usually that ‘by which’ something is, the claim is that to any form there corresponds its proper individual or singular. So an accidental form such a red has its own individual form ‘this redness’. However, this redness is not a suppositum because it is an accident, and accidents are never supposita.

In *Ord. I*, d. 2, pars 2, q. 1, Scotus clarifies the relation between a suppositum and a nature. The relation between a nature, by which he means an essence, and a suppositum seems similar to that between a universal (the nature) and its singular instantiations (different supposita). But Scotus denies that a nature is so related to a suppositum, for some natures are not universal but singular, and yet they are not supposita. Singular accidents and Christ’s human nature are examples of such natures that are singular without being supposita. Nor is nature related to a suppositum as ‘by which’ is related to ‘that’, for to each ‘by which’ there corresponds a proper ‘that’. This means that each nature has its corresponding individuated counterpart, and even each supposit has its own proper ‘by which’. The

\(^{62}\) See Scotus, *Quodl.*, q. 9, n. 8 (ed. Alluntis: 345): “Quia forma substantialis *per se* ordinatur ad esse totius; illud autem esse est actus simpliciter, compositi quidem *per se* primo, sed formae participative.”

\(^{63}\) Ibid. n. 12 (ed. Alluntis: 346): “Hinc etiam patet quare anima separata non est persona: licet enim non sit nata inhaerere, et ideo sit ens *per se* secundo modo praedicto: licet etiam possit esse ens *per se* primo modo, id est, solitarie, non tantum per virtutem causae extrinsecae, sicut potest accidens vel forma materialis, sed virtute naturae suae sibi derelictae, et hoc quia non necessario dependet a materia in proprio suo esse, tamen non potest esse ens *per se* tertio modo praedicto; et solum illud quoq est sic per se ens dictur suppositum.”

\(^{64}\) See Scotus, *Ord. II*, d. 3, pars 1, q. 2, n. 48 (Vat. 7: 413): “in entibus est aliquid indivisible in partes suicietas, hoc est ‘cui formaliter repugnat dividii in plura quorum quodlibet sit ipsum’.”

\(^{65}\) See Scotus, *Ord. I*, d. 4, pars 2 q. un, n. 11 (Vat. 8: 5): “Unicuique ‘quo’ correspondet proprium ‘quod’ vel ‘quis’.”
'by which’ of the *suppositum* must be what Scotus calls the account (*ratio*) of the supposit. But in contrast to the account of the nature, the account of a supposit is never something that can be said of anything other than the supposit of which it is the account. The two ways in which a nature is not related to a *suppositum* explain how a nature and a supposit differ. A nature or essence can be instantiated, and so it can be related to its instances as something universal to something singular. It can also be that by which many things are, for it informs them as a form informs matter and forms a composite; thus, by the form of humanity many human beings are. On the other hand, a supposit cannot be related to anything in these two ways: it is not communicated to anything as something universal to something singular, and it is not communicated to anything as something informing another thing.

The distinction between a *suppositum* and a nature is relevant for how the same one thing is or is not the foundation of the opposite relations of producer and being produced. According to Scotus, no supposit can be the foundation for these two relations, regardless of whether the *suppositum* is a limited or unlimited thing. Since a *suppositum* is an individual of a certain nature that cannot be ordered to a further being, a self-producing *suppositum* would indeed be a supposit that would produce or bring itself into a further being. Yet, this is precisely what a *suppositum* cannot do. (Recall that in production, what produces and what is produced are *supposita*.) Furthermore, no limited nature can be the foundation of the opposite relations of producer and being produced. Here Scotus is careful to rule out what happens in the divine case, where the divine essence can be the foundation of these two opposite relations, because its unlimited nature allows it to be communicated to different *supposita*. Thus, the Father is the producer and the Son is the product; although the *supposita* are different—the Father and the Son—there is the same divine essence or nature.

Self-motion might seem to be a case of production. In fact, as we have seen, Henry

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66 See Scotus, *Ord. I*, d. 2, pars. 2, qq. 1–4, n. 378 (Vat. 2: 344–45): “Ubi notandum quod natura non se habet ad suppositum sicut universale ad singulare, quia in accidentibus etiam inventitur singularitas sine ratione suppositi, et in substantia nostra natura atomata assump[ta] est a Verbo, secundum Damascenum, non tamen suppositum nostrae naturae. Neque se habet natura ad suppositum sicut quo ad quod, nam cuicumque quo correspordat proprium quod vel quis, et ita, sicut natura est quo, ita habet proprium quod vel quis quod non contrahit ad suppositum, et sicut suppositum est quo vel quis, ita habet suum proprium quo quo subsistit et tamen concomitant suppositum de necessitate est singularum, et etiam, non potest esse quo respectu alterius, quia est subsistens, non potens esse actus alicuius subsistentis; haec duo dicit duplicem incommunicabilitatem.”

67 Ibid., nn. 379–80 (Vat. 2: 345–46): “Ubi sciendum quod communicabile dicitur aliquod vel per identitatem, ita quod illud cui communicatur sit ipsum, vel per informationem, ita quod illud cui communicatur sit ipso, non ipsum. Primo modo universale communicatur singulari, et secundo modo forma materiæ. Natura igitur quaecumque quantum est ex se et de ratione naturae est communicabilis utroque modo, videlicet pluribus suppositis, quorum quodlibet sit ipsum, et etiam ut quo, tamquam forma, quo singular vel suppositum sit ens quiditative, vel habens naturam; suppositum autem est incommunicabile duplici incommunicabilitate opposita.”
understands it as such. According to Henry, the difference between self-motion in created beings and production in the Trinity is that the product in self-motion is not a distinct suppositum, as the Son is in the Trinity. The product of self-motion is a suppositum informed by a form. If self-motion is understood in terms of production (as Henry understands it), then no created thing can be a genuine self-mover. The mutual relations between producer and product cannot coexist in the same one thing because that would mean that the self-mover would generate itself. So insofar as self-motion can be analyzed as a case of production, Scotus will agree with Henry’s point that no created self-mover is a perfect self-mover. But is analyzing self-motion on the model of production the best way to understand how self-motion is possible? Recall what I said before about principiation and production: as long as one understands principiation or causal interactions as taking place between supposita, one is of course interested in what change a suppositum suffers, so one is interested in the product of this causal interaction. But Scotus is not primarily interested in this aspect. On the one hand, we know that he envisages principiation as being between forms; on the other hand, as I argued in the last chapter (section 7.4), he is interested in how in principiation a new form is brought about. This is the aspect that he wants to explain and so he probably finds Henry’s insistence on how such a form informs a suppositum and thus constitutes the product of a causal interaction not illuminating. In the end, Scotus has good reasons to think that understanding self-motion as production is not useful.

8.3.2. Active and Passive Principles, and Action and Passion

In analyzing self-motion, Scotus mostly discusses principles, not producers and products. Recall that principles or potencies are nothing other than absolute essences, “in which a certain aspect of relatedness to what is principiated is founded.”68 As I explained in chapter 4, the aspect of relatedness to the principiatum is not part of the account of what a principle or potency is. However, this aspect arises on the essence when something is principiated. In self-motion as well as in any case of causation, there are two principles, an active and a passive one. When something is principiated, for example, when something causes a feature in itself or in something else, a relation to the principiatum, that is, to the feature, arises from both the active and the passive principle. But besides the relations to the principiatum, there are also relations between the active and passive principles. Since the self-mover is both the active and the passive principle, there is the question how the same essence can be the

68 See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 5, n. 13 (OPh 4: 563). For a discussion of this text, see section 4.3.1 above.
foundation for these opposite real relations. And as if the problem were not complex enough, there is also the question: where do action and passion fit in this explanation? To answer these questions, let us start with what actions and passions are. There are two reasons for proceeding in this way. First, we are primarily interested in how Scotus responds to Aristotle’s argument that nothing can have an action and a passion at the same time and in the same respect. This argument requires us to rethink how actions and passions are defined, if self-motion is possible. Second, as we will see, once we have an answer to this issue, we will also have an answer to the question of how something can be active and passive at the same time and in the same respect.

Scotus discusses the nature of actions (and passions) in *Ord. IV*, d. 13, q. 1, where he notes two features of these items. On the one hand, actions (and passions) are such that they cannot be brought about; this must be the case, for otherwise we would run into an infinite regress. On the other hand, actions (and passions) need to be understood relationally: something is brought about by an action and an action pertains to something. If actions are not relational in nature, they cannot be from an agent or concerning a patient. These two features suggest that actions need to be similar to relations, for relations, like actions, point to other things. Add to this that if actions cannot be caused, this must be because they are relations, for relations arise immediately when their terms are posited—they are not caused. In fact, Scotus also maintains that actions are extrinsically advenient aspects of relatedness (*respectus*). Scotus understands the distinction between extrinsically and intrinsically advenient aspects of relatedness in the following way: while intrinsically advenient aspects of relatedness are such that once their *relata* are posited, they necessarily arise; extrinsically advenient aspects of relatedness are such that they do not arise necessarily when their *relata* are posited, but something else is required. This distinguishes relations proper, which are intrinsically advenient aspects of relatedness, from actions or passions, which belong to different categories, although both kinds of

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69 See Scotus, *Ord. IV*, d. 13, q. 1, nn. 27–28 (Vat. 12: 447): “‘Actio’ enim non potest poni aliquid absolutum, secundum quod ponitur unum genus istorum decem distinctum, – probatio, quia illa esset nova, et tunc sequerentur duo inconvenien. Unum generale, quod ad actionem esset actio, et sic ad infinitum, et est ratio Philosophi V *Physicorum*, qua probat quod ad actionem non potest esse motus. Qualiter autem istud sequatur, patet, quia ad omnem formam novam potest esse aliqua actio, quia illa forma non est a se nec a nihil; ergo est ab aliquo agente.”

70 Ibid., n. 36 (Vat. 12: 449): “Nec potest poni forma absoluta, sed non nova, immo coaeva illi in quo est, propere duo ut prius. Primum est universale quia tunc actio esset, et non circa aliquod passum, – quod videtur inconveniens, et contra rationem ‘actionis’, quia secundum auctorem *Sec. principiorum*, ‘actio requirit non quid agat, sed in quid agat’.”

71 Ibid., n. 43 (Vat. 12: 451): “Haec autem differenteria sufficiens ad istud quae probabiliss coligitur ex dictis auctorum, est respectus intrinsecus et extrinsecus adveniens, ut ille dicatur ‘intrinsecus adveniens’ qui necessario sequitur ambo extrema in actu posita, sive (quod idem est) necessario consequitur suum fundamentum, termino non excluso vel positi, – ‘extrinsecus’, qui non necessario sequitur extrema, etiam ambo simul in actu posita.” See also the next note.
entities involve aspects of relatedness.\textsuperscript{72}

Although Henry and Scotus agree that actions are extrinsically advenient aspects of relatedness, they disagree on a very fundamental issue, namely on what the foundation is for the aspect of relatedness that is extrinsically advenient.

Scotus’s first suggestion, which in the end he does not follow, is that action and passion are founded on motion. Since motion is in the patient, action is founded on the motion that is in the patient. But if motion is the foundation of both action and passion, and both are in the patient, how are action and passion distinct? Scotus explains that they differ as motion ‘from this’ and ‘in this’, an explanation that he links to Aristotle’s \textit{Physics} III.\textsuperscript{73} This explanation of action and passion also shares some similarities with Henry’s view. For Henry, actions are aspects of relatedness founded upon a motion or a disposition acquired through motion insofar as these (the motion and the disposition) are caused by something; passions are aspects of relatedness founded upon a motion or a disposition acquired through motion insofar as these are in something.\textsuperscript{74} The aspect of relatedness that Henry calls “from something else” (\textit{ab alio}) is to the agent that causes the motion or disposition acquired through motion, while the aspect of relatedness that Henry calls “in something else” is to the patient in which the motion or the disposition is received. The motion or the disposition acquired through motion are from the agent and in the patient. Note that while Scotus seems to take the aspect of relatedness alone to be the action or passion, for Henry actions and passions are the aspect together with its foundation.

Scotus gives a persuasive reason why the first suggestion should be rejected. He argues that action and passion need to be there where their foundation is. Since action and passion are linked with active and passive powers, they should be there where the powers are, that is, in the thing that has the active power and the thing that has the passive power. If this is correct, actions and passions cannot be founded on the motion that is in the patient.\textsuperscript{75} Notice that Scotus has a different understanding of

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., n. 44 (Vat. 12: 451): “Et tunc illa Sex principia, de quibus auctor agit, pro tanto non sunt species ‘relationis’, quia ‘relatio’ dicit respectum intrinsecus advenientem, illa autem dicuntur respectus extrinsecus advenientes. ‘Actio’ igitur erit respectus extrinsecus adveniens.”
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., n. 45 (Vat. 12: 451): “Sed cui? Videtur quod passo, secundum Philosophum III \textit{Physicorum}, ubi vult quod actio et passio fundatur in motu, motus autem est in passo, et quod non distinguitur formaliter nisi per esse ‘ab hoc’ et ‘in hoc’.”
\textsuperscript{74} See the text from Henry’s \textit{SQO}, art. 32, q. 5 quoted in note 34 above.
\textsuperscript{75} See Scotus, \textit{Ord.} IV, d. 13, q. 1, n. 46 (Vat. 12: 451): “Quia in eodem erit respectus et fundamentum, et ratio fundamenti videtur hoc ostendere; sed potentia activa est in agente et est fundamentum huius respectus.”
what an action is than people like Henry, who follow Aristotle. For example, Henry thinks that action and passion are related to what ultimately happens in the causal interaction, that is, to the final product: until the pot is not heated, there is no action and passion, because we cannot say what change the pot, the *suppositum*, suffered. In contrast, Scotus, who does not think about causation in terms of *supposita* and final products, is interested in what happens all along up to the moment that the pot ended up being heated. Thus, on his view, actions and passions are linked with the manifestation of powers, and, as we will see, are in fact the manifestations of these powers.

Scotus offers a second suggestion, namely that action is not in the patient, but in the agent:

[Text 4] Therefore, it will be said that ‘action’ is an aspect of relatedness extrinsically advenient and [it is] in the agent, as in a supposit or as in a subject, – in the form, however, which is called ‘active power’, [it is] as in a proximate foundation. And ‘passion’ refers to the opposite aspect of relatedness corresponding to it, and [it is] in the patient as in the subject and in the passive potency as in the proximate foundation.76

Note that there are two foundations for action and passion, a remote and a proximate one. The proximate one is the form, that is, the potency or principle: recall that although potency signifies two kinds of relations, to what is principiated and to another principle, a potency is according to its account an essence, that is, an absolute form. The remote foundation is either a supposit or the subject of the form. Consider the case of a fire heating a pot. The fire is a *suppositum*, for it is self-subsisting and cannot be ordered to a further being. The action of heating is an aspect of relatedness that is immediately founded upon the form of heat that is in fire. It is only remotely founded upon fire as the subject in which heat exists. The passion of being heated is founded proximately on that feature in virtue of which the pot can be heated, and remotely on the pot as a *suppositum*.

An aspect of relatedness not only is founded upon something, but is also towards something. Scotus distinguishes three possible distinct *extrema* for the aspect of relatedness that is founded on an agent.77 First, an agent can have an aspect of relatedness to its primary or total *terminus*. What Scotus has in mind here is the aspect of relatedness between a producer and its product. Recall that

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77 Ibid., nn. 50–51 (Vat. 12: 452): “Ulterius, in speciali, agens creatum habet respectum ad terminum primum sive totalem, qui dicitur productum, et ad terminum qui dicitur forma producta vel induta; et ad subiectum illius formae, quod est passum vel transmutatum. Quod autem isti respectus sint ali et ali, probatur. Quia sunt ad alios terminos.”
production involves supposita, so the aspect of relatedness is between two supposita. For example, natural generation is a case of production: a fire is related as a producer to its product, namely, another fire that it generates; between the two fires there is an aspect of relatedness. Is this aspect of relatedness an action? No, it is not. The reason is simple: the relation between a producer and its product (or its primary and total terminus) is of essential dependence. This means that the product has being from the producer, so it does not exist before the producer brings it about. While the aspect of relatedness between producer and product is necessarily adventient once the relata exist, recall that an action is an aspect of relatedness that is extrinsically adventient.\footnote{Ibid., n. 52 (Vat. 12: 452): “Probatur etiam per aliud quia respectus correspondentes e converso sunt omnino alii et alii: respectus enim producti ad producens est sicut dependentis ad illud ad quod dependet, – et hoc simpliciter secundum suum ‘esse’, sicut simpliciter accipit ‘esse’.” Note that Henry of Ghent seems to think that between the producer and the product there is some kind of accidental dependence. For example, he says that given the accidental nature of the act of volition, just as it is accidental for a man and a piece of wood to become related, so becoming related as a producer and a product is also accidental for a self-mover. See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 561rG): “quicquid enim est praeter ipsum relationem in his quae ad aliquid sive relative dicuntur per accidens relative dicuntur, et accidentaliter est relativum, scilicet quia accidit ei ipsa relatio unde duplum in eo quod est duplum, id est in eo quod duplicatas est, aliquid eius per se dicitur ad aliquid et est relativum. Homo autem vel lignum cui accidit quod sit duplum, dicitur relativum per accidens.” On the other hand, note that this remark can be connected with Scotus’s own solution to how a self-mover has an action and a passion. As we will see below, Scotus’s solution is predicated on the view that a self-mover can be the foundation for distinct real relations because the relations between active and passive principles is not of essential dependence, but of accidental one.}

Second, there is the aspect of relatedness between the agent and what Scotus calls the produced (or induced or educed) form. While the aspect of relatedness between producer and product is between two supposita, this second relation is between the producer, a suppositum, and a part of the product, a form that is induced in the product. Because the form is a part of the product, it is not a suppositum.\footnote{See Scotus, Ord. IV, d. 13, q. 1, n. 52 (Vat. 12: 452): “Respectus etiam producti et inducti patet quod sunt alii et alii, etsi uterque sit dependentis a producens, quia illud primo dependet quod primo accipit esse et hoc est productum, illud autem secundario et per accidens dependet quod secundario accipit ‘esse’, et hoc est educum vel inductum.”} For example, in the case of the fire generating another fire, this second relation is between the first fire as the producer and the form of the second fire, which form is educed from the potency of matter. The substantial form of the second fire together with matter constitute the total terminus of production or the product. This aspect of relatedness is similar to the previous one. Both are real aspects of relatedness, because their foundations are real. Moreover, both aspects of relatedness require essential dependence between the relata.\footnote{Ibid., n. 53 (Vat. 12: 453): “Istorum trium respectuum ex parte agentis duo primi non sunt extrinsecus advenientes, quia vel agents non habet relationem realem ad productum vel inductum, sicut est de Deo producente creaturam vel aliquid in creatura, – vel si habet, necessario tamen sequitur fundamentum posito termino.”} Why? Scotus says that the first (primum) and adequate terminus of production is indeed what is produced, a complete being, or the composite of

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\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., n. 52 (Vat. 12: 452): “Probatur etiam per aliud quia respectus correspondentes e converso sunt omnino alii et alii: respectus enim producti ad producens est sicut dependentis ad illud ad quod dependet, – et hoc simpliciter secundum suum ‘esse’, sicut simpliciter accipit ‘esse’.” Note that Henry of Ghent seems to think that between the producer and the product there is some kind of accidental dependence. For example, he says that given the accidental nature of the act of volition, just as it is accidental for a man and a piece of wood to become related, so becoming related as a producer and a product is also accidental for a self-mover. See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. XIV, q. 2 (1518 Badius 2: fol. 561rG): “quicquid enim est praeter ipsum relationem in his quae ad aliquid sive relative dicuntur per accidens relative dicuntur, et accidentaliter est relativum, scilicet quia accidit ei ipsa relatio unde duplum in eo quod est duplum, id est in eo quod duplicitas est, aliquid eius per se dicitur ad aliquid et est relativum. Homo autem vel lignum cui accidit quod sit duplum, dicitur relativum per accidens.” On the other hand, note that this remark can be connected with Scotus’s own solution to how a self-mover has an action and a passion. As we will see below, Scotus’s solution is predicated on the view that a self-mover can be the foundation for distinct real relations because the relations between active and passive principles is not of essential dependence, but of accidental one.

\textsuperscript{79} See Scotus, Ord. IV, d. 13, q. 1, n. 52 (Vat. 12: 452): “Respectus etiam producti et inducti patet quod sunt alii et alii, etsi uterque sit dependentis a producens, quia illud primo dependet quod primo accipit esse et hoc est productum, illud autem secundario et per accidens dependet quod secundario accipit ‘esse’, et hoc est educum vel inductum.”

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., n. 53 (Vat. 12: 453): “Istorum trium respectuum ex parte agentis duo primi non sunt extrinsecus advenientes, quia vel agents non habet relationem realem ad productum vel inductum, sicut est de Deo producente creaturam vel aliquid in creatura, – vel si habet, necessario tamen sequitur fundamentum posito termino.”
matter and form. The form educed or the product induced is the formal *terminus* of production. To be the formal *terminus* of production does not mean to be its *per accidens* end term. These claims propose the following understanding of production: production ends with a whole being; for example, in generation it ends with a composite of matter and form, and this composite is the adequate and primary end term of production. However, any production has also a formal *terminus*, for example, the substantial form of the composite. The formal *terminus* is not a *per accidens* *terminus* of production, that is, it is not an accidental feature of production that it ends with a substantial form being brought about; indeed, without its form, the primary end of production, the product, would not be possible. Given this, the formal *terminus* must be an essential but not primary *terminus* of production.

Note that the relation between an agent or an active principle and the formal *terminus* of production corresponds to the relation between a principle and its *principiatum*. The *principiatum* is not necessarily the whole product, at least not for Scotus, although it is for Henry. For Scotus, in causal interactions, the *principiatum* can be a form that is an essential part of the final product.

Is the relation between a principle and its *principiatum* (or between the producer and the formal *terminus* of production) an action? Because the induced form is an essential, albeit not primary *terminus* of production, the aspect of relatedness between a producer and this formal *terminus* cannot be an action. The reason is the same as in the case of the aspect of relatedness between the producer and the product. If the aspect of relatedness between producer and product is necessarily advenient, the aspect of relatedness between the producer and an essential constituent of a product must be also necessarily advenient, for once the product is posited, the induced form, which is an essential part of the product, must also be posited.

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81 See Scotus, *Ord. I*, d. 5, pars. 1, q. un., nn. 27–28 (Vat. 4: 25–26): “dico quod productio habet productum pro termino suo primo, et dico hic ‘primum terminum’ terminum adequantum; et hoc modo dicit Philosophus VII *Metaphysicae* quod compositum primo generatur, quia est quod primo habet esse per productionem, hoc est adequantum. In composito tamen forma est formalis terminus generationis, non autem terminus per accidens, – sicut apparat per Philosophum II *Physicorum*, ubi probat formam esse naturam per hoc quod ‘generatio est naturalis quia est via in naturam, est autem via in formam, ergo etc.’ – quae ratio nulla est si forma tantum esset terminus per accidens generationis. Et in codem etiam vult quod forma et finis coincident in idem, quod non est verum de fine genit, sed generationis. Forma igitur vere est finis generationis.” But how can the same one producer be essentially related to two *termini*? To answer this question, recall that according to Scotus, a thing *a* can be related essentially and primarily to a thing *b* when it is related in virtue of *a*’s species; it is related essentially, but not primarily, when it is related in virtue of its genus. In production, a producer is related essentially and primarily to a product in virtue of the product’s being—Scotus does emphasize that what is produced essentially depends for its being on the producer. The formal *terminus* of the production is an essential part of the total *terminus*. The producer must also be related essentially and non-primarily to a part of the product, in fact to an essential constituent of the product, in virtue of being essentially related to the product’s being. On the formal *terminus* of production see also Paasch, *Divine Production in Late Medieval Trinitarian Theology*, 47–52.
Lastly, an aspect of relatedness is between an agent and the patient or the subject of the induced product, or, to put it slightly differently, between what causes change and what can be changed. But note how the aspect of relatedness comes about on these two principles. Active and passive principles can be suitable to each other and properly approximated, yet it might happen that no aspect of relatedness between these principles arises, for they are impeded. Thus, the aspect of relatedness between what causes change to what can be changed is not necessarily advenient once its \textit{relata} (the suitably approximated principles) are posited—it is extrinsically advenient.\footnote{See Scotus, \textit{Ord. IV}, d. 13, q. 1, n. 54 (Vat. 12: 453): “Ille autem ‘respectus qui est ad passum’ est extrinsecus adveniens, quoniam bene possibile est activum et passivum esse approximata, et tamen non habere istum respectum, quod agens sit illud a quo transmutetur, nec illud transmutetur ab ipso, utpote si est aliquid impediens actionem. Igitur actio, cum sit respectus extrinsecus adveniens, ut est deductum, erit habitudo agentis ad passum transmutatum.”} What accounts for things becoming agents and patients, or for the aspect of relatedness arising between what can be changed (or the patient) and what causes change (or the agent) is the induced form. The induced form does not always occur when suitable active and passive principles are in the required proximity (because impediments might interfere); when it does occur, the third aspect of relatedness also arises.

The same point can be made by saying that there is no essential dependence between an agent and a patient. A thing essentially depends on something else if it depends on it for its own being or for the kind of thing it is. For example, the product is essentially dependent on the product, for there is no product without the producer. But the agent and the patient are not essentially dependent. What can be changed (or the patient) \textit{only concurs} with what changes (or the agent) so that a form is induced in the product, but its existence is not essentially dependent on the agent. Scotus emphasizes that both the agent and the patient have their own being—they are forms. But he also notices that when an agent and a patient concur and pricipiate together, there is some accidental being that they receive, namely, they are now an agent and a patient. Metaphysically speaking, they become the foundation for two aspects of relatedness: one that is from the agent to the patient, and another one that is from the patient to the agent.\footnote{Ibid., n. 52 (Vat. 12: 452): “respectus autem transmutabilis ad transmutatum non est respectus dependentis simpliciter secundum ‘esse’: transmutable enim, secundum ‘esse’ simpliciter concurrat cum agente ut concausa, et non accipit simpliciter ‘esse’ ab illo, sed tantum accipit ‘esse’ secundum formam quae inductur.”}

Consider again the case of a fire heating a pot. The third aspect of relatedness is between two principles, an active one (heat or fire) and a passive one (some feature in virtue of which the pot gets hot, for example, a certain type of material of which it is made). For this aspect to arise, two conditions must be met: (1) the suitable active and passive principles need to be present in adequate proximity,
and (2) the induced substantial form of fire needs to be present. Once these conditions are met, the aspect of relatedness between the agent, the fire, and what can suffer change, the patient, in this case matter, arises. 84

The third aspect of relatedness differs from the previous two in two respects. First, it differs with respect to the entities that are related. While the previous aspects of relatedness are between a producer and its product, or a producer and an essential constituent of the product, and thus they always involve at least one suppositum, the third aspect is between forms or, in the case of a self-mover, between different aspects of the same form. So this third aspect of relatedness does not necessarily involve a suppositum. 85 Second, the aspects differ in the way they arise. As I said, the former two aspects are necessarily or intrinsically advenient: once the extrema are posited, the aspect arises; once there is a producer, there is a product or an essential part of the product. The third aspect is extrinsically advenient: it requires the presence of the form induced.

Only this third aspect of relatedness from the agent to the patient when an induced form occurs is an action (or a passion). This is so because actions (and passions) are extrinsically advenient aspects of relatedness, and this third aspect of relatedness from the agent to the patient is extrinsically advenient. A passion is the aspect of relatedness from the patient to the agent when a form is induced. 86

84 It is not clear to me whether this relation needs to be prior to the previous two. I am inclined to say that they must be at the same time. However, in an argument against Henry, Scotus argues for its priority. But note that it might be that Scotus is not committed to this view but argues only that Henry must be. See Ord. I, d. 5, pars 2, q. un., nn. 76–77 (Vat. 4: 53–54): “quando ad productionem effectus concurrunt activum et passivum, prior est naturaliter respectus activi ad passivum quam utriusque ad productum. Probatio, quia oportet causas diversas eiusmodem prius naturaliter approximandi ad invicem quam producant effectum, – et patet per exemplum de igne calefactivo et ligno calefactibili, et genito calore. […] quia activum agit in passivum se solo in ratione causae, non producit nisi alio concurrente in ratione concausantis; et si omnino neges prioritatem respectus ad respectum, non potes negare quin necessario sit respectus activi ad passivum non posterior respectu utriusque ad productum.”

85 One can take into consideration the subject of the principles (that is, the remote foundation of the aspect), so one can look to the supposita that has the principles, but this is not necessary for considering the third aspect. I will further discuss the role of supposita in action and passion in the next subsection.

86 Note that my interpretation of Scotus’s understanding of what action is goes against an interpretation put forward by Richard Cross. In discussing whether acts of cognition are actions, Cross recognizes that actions are extrinsically advenient relations; however, he then has problems in identifying the termini of these relations. In the end, he suggests that Scotus should have said instead that “the relation arises automatically (and thus intrinsically) given the existence of the agent and the altered effect.” (See Cross, Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition, 120.) In my view, Cross mistakenly equates production, which is between a producer and a product, with principiation, which might be taken in two senses. Principiation can refer to (1) the relation between a principle and the principiatum (in this sense, principiation is similar to the relation between the producer and the formal terminus of the production), but also (2) the relation between two principles (which does not map at all onto the relation of production). Cross makes in my view a further faux-pas when he takes the altered effect—passum transmutatum (see the text in note 82)—to refer to the product. But Scotus seems to refer to the passive principle
This discussion shows the connection between action and passion and principles. Scotus explains that an action is the act (actus) of an active potency, although it is the change of another, namely of what can be changed, insofar as it is another. A passion is also an act, but of a passive power. Here act should be understood in the sense of manifestation or actuation. So action and passion are in fact the manifestations of active and passive principles. Of course, the manifestations of active and passive principles are accidental to them. This is why they are extrinsically adventient—they require the presence of an induced form, that is, what they principiate together.

Now that we know what Scotus means by action, passion and their connection with principles, we can return to the problem of how something can be the foundation of the opposite real relations, and Aristotle’s argument that nothing can have an action and a passion at the same time. Scotus understands that in a causal interaction, including self-motion, a principle is related to a principiatum or to another principle. The relation between a principle and its principiatum is in the fact the relation between the producer and the product. No one and the same thing can be at the same time the foundation for such a relation because the relation is of essential dependence. So no one and the same thing can be a producer and product or a principle and its principiatum. The relation between a principle and another principle is in fact what constitutes the action and passion of a self-mover. This is not a relation of essential dependence, but of accidental dependence: in a self-mover, active and passive principles become related in this way when one principle, together with another principle, principiates a form, which is received in the passive principle. This further means that actions and passions are extrinsically adventient aspects of relatedness, which do not arise necessarily in the presence of active and passive principles alone, but something else is needed, namely, a form that is induced.

One might not be convinced of this solution. The relations that arise between the active and passive principles in the presence of a form (which they principiate together) are opposite relations.

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87 See Scotus, Ord. IV, d. 13, q. 1, n. 55 (Vat. 12: 453): “Et hoc confirmatur per Philosophum, V Metaphysicae, qui definit potentiam activam esse ‘principium transmutandi aliud in quantum aliud’; sicut autem potentia activa est principium, ita actio – quae est actus potentiae activae – erit transmutatio alterius, id est passivi in quantum alterum est.”

88 In a short remark in QSM IX, qq. 3–4, Scotus calls the action ‘eliciting’. See Scotus, QSM IX, qq. 3–4, n. 49 (OPh 4: 557–58): “Illum autem actionem proprie dictam, cuius intellectio est terminus, designamus communiter per hoc quod est ‘elicere’. Intellectionem enim elicit intellectus, non autem intellectione aliquid agit. Et est exemplum: calor enim est natura absoluta terminans calefactionem, prout ‘calefactio’ notat proprie actionem, qua actione calor fit sive producitur, et quae actio proprie non producitur.”
So they cannot have as their foundation the same one thing or essence, as would be necessary if self-motion were possible. In the same way that a human being cannot be a father and a son, the same one thing cannot be active and passive. This objection requires an explanation of why the accidental dependence between active and passive principles solves the problem of how something can be the foundation of the opposed relations between active and passive principles.

To answer this objection, first let me note that Scotus thinks that the nature of dependence between active and passive principles is indeed the key to how it is possible for the relations between them to supervene on the same foundation. This can be seen from the following text:

[Text 5] To the other argument, when it is said that in the same thing, there cannot be opposed real relations, I say that it is impossible that the real opposed relations are in the same thing when there is an essential order between the relata, such as between the generated and what is generated; but where the relations require neither order nor essential dependence between the relata, [but] only an accidental [dependence], there they can exist in the same thing, as it is the case with the mover and the moved.

Essential dependence between active and passive principles would be a problem for the possibility of self-motion, for if in the self-mover, the active principle essentially depended on the passive principle (or the other way around), then the nature of the self-mover, which must be the foundation of the active principle for $\varphi$, would essentially depend on the same nature of the self-mover, which must also be the foundation of the passive principle for $\varphi$. This would further mean that a nature would depend on itself to exist and to be the kind of nature it is. No created nature can depend on itself in this way, and so no created thing can be the foundation of essentially dependent active and passive principles. Given this, the accidental dependence between these principles seems to be the solution. But again, why does accidental dependence work in the case of active and passive principles?

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89 See Scotus, QM IX, q. 14, n. 110 (OPh 4: 668–69): “Contra istud arguitur: omnia opposita includunt contradictoria; ergo si eidem insunt relationes oppositae, eidem inerunt contradictoria.”

90 See Scotus, Let. II, d. 25, q. un, n. 90 (Vat. 19: 260): “Ad aliud, quando arguitur quod in eodem non possunt esse relationes reales oppositae, dico quod quando relativa habent ordinem essentialem, ut generans et genitum, impossibile est quod relationes reales oppositae sint in eodem; sed ubi relationes non requirunt ordinem nec dependentiam essentialem inter relativa, sed tantum secundum quid, ibi possunt esse in eodem, sicut est de movente et moto.” The text continues with the following explanation: “non oportet motum semper essentialiter dependere a movente, sed secundum quid, scilicet secundum aliquam perfectionem accidentalem; et ideo ex ratione relationum oppositiorum non potest concludi quod non possunt esse in eodem.” The view also appears in Scotus, QM IX, q. 14, n. 107 (OPh 4: 667–68): “Secundae duae relationes quandoque possunt in uno supposito etiam in una natura fundari, quia sic relata non dependent essentialiter unum ab altero, sed tantum accidentaliter: hoc ut faciat, illud ut recipiat aliqquad ab illo, non ut sit ab illo.”
Concerning the objection itself, namely that the relations between active and passive principles cannot supervene on the same foundation because they cancel each other, Scotus advances two answers. Here I will discuss only the first one because it is the one that Scotus seems to endorse. In answering the objection, he returns to the essential dependence or lack thereof between active and passive principles and offers what is in fact a more comprehensive explanation of why in some cases relatives are so opposed that they cancel each other. Recall that Simplicius and Aquinas noted that opposed relations can exist in the same thing, but not in the same respect: a person can be a father and a son, but not with respect to the same person. They also seemed to generalize this conclusion to all cases of opposed relatives, a generalization that seems to be the primary motivation for believing that nothing can be an active and a passive principle with respect to the same feature. Scotus argues, however, that the generalization cannot be made. He does this by explaining why in fact some opposed relatives (such as father and son) cannot be found in the same thing and in the same respect: in these cases, the *relata* are essentially dependent on each other. Indeed, there is no father without a son, and no son without a father, for one, the son, depends for his being on the father. Thus, Scotus remarks that relative items are not simply repugnant to each other in virtue of being relative items—indeed,
the same person can be both a father and a son. Second, he claims that if relative items cancel each other in the same thing, this occurs in virtue of their foundations—more precisely because between these foundations, there is an essential dependence.  

Thus, the only reason why the mutual relations between active and passive potencies might be opposed is if these principles are essentially dependent on each other. But since they are not essentially dependent on each other, the same one thing can be active and passive at the same time.

In conclusion, according to Scotus, active and passive principles for the same act can be in the same thing at the same time because there is no essential dependence between two such principles. Because there is no such essential dependence, an active principle becomes related to passive principles only when they succeed in causing together a form that is received in the passive principle. Thus, until the moment the form is received, active and passive principles are not related as two principles. Moreover, note that when the two principles are related, this happens because a new form is induced in the patient. Thus, a self-mover has an action or passion at the same time only because there is an extra item that is induced in the patient. So, in the end, the presence of an action and a passion in a self-mover depends on something different from the self-mover, namely on the form that is induced.

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92 See Scotus, QSM IX, q. 14, n. 112 (OPh 4: 669): “Ad primum potest dici quod relativa non includunt repugnantiain unde relativa sunt, sed ratione fundamentorum inter quae est essentialis dependentia.”

93 Note that Scotus’s argument remains vulnerable to any new counterargument that manages to show that opposition between relations can be explained in terms other than essential dependence, for he does not show that only essential dependence is responsible for why two mutual relations are opposed in the same thing. But it is also true that he does not need to do this, for this is the job of his opponent. In fact, by discussing essential dependence, Scotus has constructed on behalf of his opponent an argument for why mutual relations can be opposed in the same thing.

94 It is interesting to compare this insight with Marmodoro’s interpretation of Aristotle’s view on the relation between active and passive powers in causation. Marmodoro argues that “the active and the passive powers are monadic properties that are ontologically interdependent.” She explains this interdependence as existential dependence, that is, “there is no mover if there is no movable.” (See Anna Marmodoro, “Potentiality in Aristotle’s Metaphysics,” in The Handbook of Potentiality, ed. K. Engelhard and M. Quante (Dordrecht: Springer, forthcoming), https://www.academia.edu/3634267/Potentiality_in_Aristotles_Metaphysics.) From the perspective of Scotus’s view on the relations between active and passive powers, one can criticize Marmodo’s view on two points: first, she does not take into account that actions and passions are extrinsically advenient in the presence of the form; second, she might want to distinguish between the suitability relation between active and passive powers (this suitability relation can be one of ontological dependence) and the extrinsically advenient relations between active and passive powers (these relations are the actions and passions).
8.3.3. Scotus against Henry on the Role of *Supposita* in Self-Motion

Scotus solves the problem of how something can have both an action and a passion at the same time concerning the same feature by understanding the relations between active and passive principles as relations of accidental dependence. In a nutshell, Scotus says that

(1) only real mutual relations of essential dependence cannot have the same one thing as foundation;

(2) the relations between active and passive principles for \( \varphi \) are relations of accidental dependence because they arise not simply on the presence of these principles, but something else (\( \varphi \)) must also be present;

(3) therefore, the same one thing can be the foundation of mutual real relations between active and passive principles for \( \varphi \).

Note that the bringing about of \( \varphi \) plays a crucial role in Scotus’s solution: genuine self-motion is possible precisely because the relations between active and passive principles for \( \varphi \) cannot arise without the presence of \( \varphi \). For example, the will moves itself, that is, it becomes the foundation for the distinct relations between active and passive principle, only when an act of volition comes about. This claim about what makes self-motion possible is in stark contrast to Henry’s claim that complete self-motion is not possible in created beings because an accidental form is produced.

We are faced with the following puzzle: while both Henry and Scotus agree that self-motion in created beings is not possible without an accidental form being caused, they reach opposite conclusions concerning the genuine character of such self-motion. As we will see in a moment, the reason for their different conclusions lies in the different ways in which they understand the role of the accidental form that is caused.

While both Henry and Scotus require the presence of an accidental form for having agents and patients in self-motion, for Henry, this form, because it becomes part of the product, makes the self-motion process somehow not genuine. Recall that Henry envisages the contribution of active and passive principles in principiation in the following way: the active principle brings about the form, whereas the passive principle receives the form and so becomes part of the product. For the self-mover to play the role of a passive principle, the form not only needs to be present, but must also be received in the passive principle. The self-mover becomes a passive principle only when this form is received, at which moment there is a product of the principiation, an accidental compound—a *suppositum* informed by a form. This raises a problem: while the *suppositum* that starts the self-motion
and the one that ends are the same substance, they are not considered in the same way at the beginning of the self-motion and at the end of it. Thus, for Henry, the form is not only a *sine qua non* condition for the relations of being active and passive principles to arise in the self-mover, but it is also what accounts for the difference in conceiving the role of the self-mover in active and passive principiatio. At this point, one might object that because this is a difference in conceiving the role of the self-mover, it is not necessarily an ontological difference. However, it *is* an ontological difference: the relations of active and passive principle arise only when the form is received, which means that they arise only because what starts the self-motion is different from what ends it. Compare this view with Scotus’s view. For Scotus, actions and passions, which are the acts of active and passive principles, are founded on an essence only in the presence of an induced form. Since he understands the relation to be between two principles, that is, between two forms, or in self-motion between the same form insofar as it has an active and a passive, Scotus does not need to consider the causal contribution of *supposita* in principiation, nor does he need to consider what happens to them when the form is received.

Although it seems prima facie that the difference between these two authors consists in the different ways in which they conceptualize the role of the passive principle, in fact the difference in their views lies in how they understand the role of *supposita*. For Henry, a passive principle needs to receive the form, while for Scotus, its contribution is explained as the passive principiatio of the form. Scotus also recognizes that in principiating the product, a form is received, but actions and passions are not about this aspect. However, if we inquire further into why Henry maintains that the passive principle contributes as the receiver of the form, we see that this is because he explains principiation by appeal to *supposita*. It is not the form of the self-mover alone that brings about an accidental item in itself; it is the self-mover as a suppositum that does this. If the self-mover as a whole, so as a *supositum*, has a passive causal contribution to the principiation, this cannot be other than by receiving the accidental form. Thus, the question is why Henry emphasizes the causal contribution of *supposita* in principiation, while Scotus emphasizes that of forms?

Scotus does not completely reject the explanatory value of supposita. Recall the axiom “Actions (and passions) pertains to *supposita*.” Usually medieval philosophers understand this ‘axiom’

95 On this axiom, see the texts mentioned in note 49, chapter 3. Note that Richard Cross draws attention to Scotus’s rejection of this axiom and suggests that his rejection is motivated by Scotus’s commitment to the view that what acts needs to be something that has *per se* unity. (See Cross, “Accidents, Substantial Forms, and Causal Powers,” 140–41.) In
as stemming from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* book I, but Scotus remarks that what the Aristotelian text in fact says is not that an action pertains to a *suppositum*, but that an action is about singulars, that is, it is concerned with singular things as its object. Although the ‘axiom’ does not have any textual evidence in the Aristotelian text, Scotus does not reject it, but proposes that in order to be accepted, it must be interpreted in the following way:

[Text 6] “[A]ction pertains to the supposit” as to that which is ultimately denominated from action, but not as to that, which is the only one denominated from it.

A supposit is said to be that to which action is ultimately attributed because it is the most concrete thing to which action can be attributed. Recall that the term ‘denominative’ refers to paronyms, so the ultimate denominator must be the most concrete term in a family of paronymous terms. Yet [Text 6] carefully adds that the *suppositum* is not the only entity to which action can be attributed. Indeed, action can be attributed to another concrete item, namely, something formal in the supposit. For example, the action of heating can be attributed to fire as to the most concrete item, a supposit; but it can also be attributed to something formal in the supposit, namely to heat. This double attribution of action (and passion) require further explanation, for it is not clear under what condition the attribution can be made correctly. Scotus thus adds that an action is attributed to a form only if that form exists, for example, action is attributed to heat, if heat exists.

Yet, it is still unclear what is more correct: to attribute action to the ultimate denominator, namely to the most concrete item, the *suppositum* or to the form? One might think that action must be attributed to the ultimate denominator. For example, in created things, an individuated form, if it is

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97 See Scotus, *Ord. IV*, d. 12, pars 2, q. un., n. 283 (Vat. 12: 383): “Si igitur accipitur ista propositio “actio est suppositi”, sumatur aliunde quam a Philosopho saltem hic: ‘actio est suppositi ut ultimate denominati ab actione, sed non ut solius suppositi ut agentis’.”

98 See Scotus, *Ord. IV*, d. 12, pars 2, q. un., n. 283 (Vat. 12: 383): “Hanc solutionem intelligere potest ex distinctione 5 I libri quae quoniam […] ubi habetur quomodo ab eodem abstracto, et maxime dicente respectum, possunt accipi plura denominativa, denominantia plura ad quae cadit illa forma et secundum ordinem (sicut ab hoc abstracto ‘potentialitas’ accipitur hoc concretum proximum quod est ‘potentia’ et dictur de calore; et ulterius hoc concretum quod est ‘potens’, et dictur de igne habente calorem. Eodem modo potest accipi ab ‘actione’ unum concretum quod denominet formale principium agendi, et illud de ‘calore’ diceretur, utpote ‘si esset, calor calefacta’, id est ‘est quo habens agit’ sicut calor est potentia calefactiva, nec tamen est potentialitas nec potens).”
an accident, depends for its existence on a substance. This might seem a compelling reason to attribute the action of the form to the suppositum. However, Scotus insists that:

[Text 7] [W]hat accounts for something being a supposit [ratio suppositi] neither adds something positive to acting, nor orders it to a patient.99

Recall that for Scotus supposita are not only (1) individual things that can exist separately from other things, and not in virtue of something extrinsic to them (as accidents and matter naturally do), but (2) they also do not have any aptitude for inhering in something else (as accidents have and as substances do not have), and (3) they cannot be ordered to more complete beings. So supposita are beings that meet three criteria: (1) that of singularity or individuality, (2) that of non-inherence, and (3) that of non-ordering to something else.

What role do singularity, non-inherence, and non-ordering play in explaining action? Scotus considers singularity a necessary condition for action, but not in the sense of singularity being that on account of which something acts (ratio agendi), because that is the form.100 For a thing to act, it needs to be an individual, but it does not act because it is an individual. Since a form, like any form, is not a singular from itself, then when it is individuated it should exist. Indeed, Scotus considers actual existence or being a condition for action.101 Yet, like singularity, existence does not seem to be part of that on account of which something acts. Since singularity and actual existence are necessary conditions for action, are non-inherence and non-ordering also necessary conditions for action? No: the second part of [Text 6] rules that out, since it allows for forms such as accidents to act. If action can be attributed to an accidental form, for example, to heat, then action requires in addition to an active form only singularity and existence—accidents are both capable of inhering in a substance and

99 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 7, q. 1, n. 78 (Vat. 4: 142): “certum est quod ratio suppositi nihil dat alicui positivum ad agendum; sed nec ordinem ad alia passa.” Scotus usually discusses the role of suppositae when he discusses the Trinity. For Scotus’s rejection of being a supposit as a precondition for action in the divine case, see Scotus, Quodl., q. 4, n. 66 (ed. Alluntis: 161): “Sed arguitur hoc: quia omne ‘agere’ prae supponit ‘esse’; ergo ‘agere’ non potest esse prima ratio essendi ipsius agentis. Respondeo: ‘Esse’ in divinis potest accepi vel pro esse simpliciter vel pro esse incommunicabilis; simpliciter non est ibi nisi unicam esse, sicut saepe dictum est per Augustinum, ut essentiae; esse autem incommunicabile sive hypostaticum est ibi alius et alius, sicut alia et alia persona. Si ergo accipias in proposito quod ‘agere’ prae supponit ‘esse simpliciter’, quod est esse ad se, concedo. Si autem accipias quod ‘agere’ prae supponit ‘esse hypostaticum’, quod in proposito non est nisi esse ad alterum, falsum est; quia ipsum ‘agere’ est primum esse ad alterum, sicut ipsa actio productiva est prima habitudo ad alterum.”

100 See Scotus, Ord. I, d. 3 q. 6, n. 380 (Vat. 3: 231): “Ideo respondeo quod aliquia potest esse ‘ratio agendi’, et aliquia ‘ratio agentis’. Singularitas est conditio agentis, non ratio agendi, sed ratio agendi est ipsa forma in singulari, secundum quam singulari agit.”

101 See the second text mentioned in note 99 above. See also Scotus, Ord. I, d. 7, q. 1, n. 77 (Vat. 4: 142): “quia ad ‘agere’ non requiritur nisi actualitas et ‘per se esse’.”
being ordered to a substance.

For Scotus, action is more correctly and precisely attributed to an individuated existing form than to a *suppositum*. Since only individuality and actual existence are necessary conditions for action, being a *suppositum* is not a necessary condition for action. For example, according to Scotus’s necessary criteria for action, an accident, which can never be a *suppositum*, can act, for it can exist as an individual (by divine power). Thus, although Scotus does not deny that action can be attributed to *supposita*, he would emphasize that this attribution is not the most precise and correct one. If we want to attribute action to something, we should attribute it to a form.

One might argue that Scotus’s view is counterintuitive. Such a person might think that the ‘axiom’ that actions pertain to *supposita* captures an important intuition about human agency. We experience ourselves as the agents of our actions, as the subjects who think and will. Thus, actions and passions should be attributed to *supposita*. Nevertheless, we should also remember that when it comes to things other than us we call them agents or patients usually because parts of them cause or suffer something. This can be seen in the case of artifacts. For example, we say that an air conditioner cools the air, but what we mean is that a certain part of that machine cools the air, or we say that an oven gets hot, but again we mean that a part of it gets hot. We also call natural things agents and patients because parts of them act or suffer changes. For example, we say that trees produce oxygen, but in fact what we mean is that leaves absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through their stomata, and the carbon dioxide absorbed is then transformed with the help of chlorophyll into oxygen. So it is not clear that Scotus’s position is counterintuitive.

But if Scotus’s position—to emphasize the causal contribution of forms instead of *supposita*—is not counterintuitive, then why does Henry stick to the position that actions and passions need to be attributed to *supposita*? This is a fair question to raise, for Henry’s explanation of the possibility of self-motion is complicated by his insistence on analyzing principiation in terms of *supposita*. To this question, I have only a tentative answer: Henry adheres to the view that actions pertain to *supposita* because of his view about causal powers as determinations of an essence. Recall that for a created thing to have powers, God determines from what is possible for a form a smaller set of possibilities that become the essence’s powers. But he determines this range of possibilities by uniting a form with other forms and even with matter. This amounts to creating a *suppositum*. Thus, in the process of the constitution of a *suppositum*, the powers of essences are further and further determined and they
become in a certain way the powers of the \textit{suppositum}.\footnote{In fact, Henry says that the sensitive powers are properly speaking powers of the composite, and not of the soul. See \textit{Quodl. III}, q. 14 (1518 Badius 1: fol. 71rE): “alio modo determinantur in anima potentiae sensitivae, alio modo potentiae intellectivae. Illae (i.e potentiae sensitivae) enim determinantur in anima ex dispositione organi ante informationem specierum per quas actu sentit; immo potius determinantur in composito, quia proprie, ut dictum est, sunt potentiae compositi et non animae, nec sunt in anima nisi sicut in radice ex qua causantur dispositiones organi et determinantur rationes potentiarum animae in ipsa.”} For Henry, the determination is finally concluded when a suposit exists, and the outcome of the determination is the full constitution of its powers. Before the \textit{suppositum} is constituted, powers can be more and narrowly determined. As further and further determinable, the powers of an essence would be only remote powers, not proximate ones.\footnote{Henry’s distinction between remote and proximate powers is similar to Sydney Shoemaker’s distinction between conditional powers and powers \textit{simpliciter}. Shoemaker explains the two concepts as following: “A thing’s having a power simpliciter is a matter of its being such that its being in certain circumstances, e.g. its being related in certain ways to other things of certain sorts, causes (or contributes to causing) certain effects. A thing has a conditional power if it is such that if it had certain properties it would have a certain power simpliciter, where those properties are not themselves sufficient to bestow that power simpliciter.” See Sydney Shoemaker, “Realization and Mental Causation,” in \textit{The Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, Volume IX: Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Psychology}, ed. Carl Elevitch (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 2001), 25.} As remote powers, they cannot play even the small part that Henry assign to powers in principiation, namely being part of that on account of which something acts.

### 8.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on the problem of how a self-mover can have what seems to be incompatible features—specifically, how it can be an agent and a patient with respect to same feature, or have actions and passions concerning the same thing. In medieval philosophy, this issue is framed as an issue about how opposite real relations can supervene on the same foundation. A traditional interpretation is that opposite relatives can have the same foundation (for example, Peter can be both a father and a son), but no opposite relatives can have the same foundation and be towards the same \textit{terminus} (Peter cannot be both the father and the son of John). Given this, one would expect that no self-mover can be active and passive with respect to the same feature. Henry and Scotus disagree with this conclusion, but when they explain how such opposite relations (the relations of being active and passive) supervene on a self-mover, their replies are very different.

Henry offers a puzzling view. On the one hand, he does not take the relations of being active and passive to cancel each other when they are in the same foundation towards the same \textit{terminus}, although he does not give an explanation why they are not. On the other hand, he argues that no
created thing is a perfect self-mover, for in any such self-mover what starts the self-motion and what ends it are entities that are somewhat different. What starts the self-motion is a *suppositum*, while what ends it is a *suppositum* informed by a form. This view becomes less puzzling when we notice how Henry understands self-motion: the self-motion of created beings is a case of production in which the same *suppositum* plays two principiative roles: it brings about and receives a form in itself. The presence of this form has several functions. First, it is the last necessary condition for two opposed relations of principiation (being active and passive) to arise on the self-mover. Second, it is also the reason why a self-mover as one and the same thing cannot be the foundation of the opposed relations of principiation: because the *suppositum*’s passive principiative role is to receive this form, what starts the principiation is different from what ends it. This means that through the relations of principiation, a *suppositum* is related not to itself without qualifications, but to itself insofar as it had received a perfection. Third, the form is the foundation for the opposite aspects of relatedness, from the agent and in the patient, aspects that enter the constitution of action and passion.

Scotus probably thinks that Henry’s analysis of self-motion in terms of production is not sufficiently fine-grained. In contrast to Henry, he distinguishes three kinds of relations: between producer and product, between a principle and its *principiatum* (or the producer and the formal *terminus* of production), and between principles. Analyzing self-motion in terms of producer and product as Henry proposed yields the result that no self-mover can be a producer and a product at the same time. But this is hardly an interesting point to make: self-motion is not genuine self-production. Analyzing self-motion in terms of actions and passions and the relation between active and passive principles yields a more interesting result, namely that a self-mover can be at the same time the foundation for opposite relations (such as the ones that constitute actions and passions). These relations (or to be more precise, aspects of relatedness) are founded upon the self-mover, but arise only in the presence of the form that the self-mover brings about in itself.

Although both Henry and Scotus agree on an important point, namely that there is no self-motion without the bringing about of a form that is really distinct from the self-mover, they end up, due to other conceptual commitments (to what principiation, production, action and passion are), assigning different roles to the presence of this form in the self-mover. For Henry, the reception of this form is an essential part of what is produced in self-motion and the reason why there is no perfect self-motion; for Scotus, the reception of the form is just a necessary condition for a self-mover to become an agent and a patient and to have an action and a passion.
Final Conclusions

This dissertation started from a plausible assumption: if we want an answer to the question of how medieval philosophers such as Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus defend the possibility of self-motion, we need to consider what they say about causal powers. Causal powers are ubiquitous in Aristotelian philosophy: in any case of causation, including self-motion and self-agency, things do what they do by exercising their powers. Thus, considerations about the nature of causal powers affect how one thinks about their causal contribution, their relation to possibility, and how one understands causation in general. This thesis has shown that Henry and Scotus think very differently about these issues. It is no surprise then that in the end they have quite different understandings of self-change, self-motion, and self-agency.

If one thinks that powers are such that they themselves cannot do anything, as Henry does, then the main actors in causation must be something else than powers. For Henry, powers are relations, entities without efficacy; their causal role is reduced to determining something to a certain act. What acts in fact is the whole thing that has a power: causation is about the interactions between things, not between powers. Thus, it makes sense for him to inquire into how at the end of a causal interaction, something has changed, for without the whole thing being changed, there cannot be properly speaking a causal interaction. This view about the nature of causal powers and causation led him to a certain understanding of the causal contributions of active and passive powers, and their relation to possibility. Since powers cannot have a direct causal contribution, the way they play an explanatory role in causation is by grounding claims about what is possible for a thing. Things can bring about something in virtue of their active powers, while in virtue of their passive powers they are able to become constitutive parts of the final products of causal interactions.

When it comes to explaining self-motion and self-agency, Henry does not depart from this understanding of causation. Self-change is a causal interaction in which a thing acts on itself and ends up being changed in a certain way. At the end of this causal interaction, there is a thing that now has a feature that it did not have before. In virtue of its active power, a self-mover (or self-agent) can bring about a certain feature in itself, while in virtue of its passive power, it is able to receive this feature so that it is changed in a certain way.

Aristotle posited that for something to count as a self-mover, it has to change itself as a whole and essentially, but is this sufficient for perfect self-motion? And what exactly does it mean to be a perfect self-mover? Henry’s explanation of self-motion leaves room for some self-changers to change
themselves as a whole and essentially. But Henry also observes that in any case of self-change, in created beings, what starts the change and what ends it are quite different entities: the product of this causal interaction is a thing that has a feature that it not only did not have before, but is also different from itself. For Henry, this outcome suggests that perfect self-motion in created things is never possible. Thus, for him, perfect self-change must be a case of causation in which something is not only the ultimate origin of what happens to itself but also its complete origin. A perfect self-changer should be unaffected by anything extrinsic to itself, not when it starts to change and especially not when the change ended.

In contrast to Henry, Scotus understands powers as forms, that is, as entities that can have direct causal relevance. Thus, he thinks that in causation, what acts and suffers are these forms. Of course, we can attribute actions and passions to the bearers of the powers, but we can do this not because these bearers make causal contributions, but because forms do not exist except in these bearers. Since in causation, active and passive powers come together to produce something, the outcome of these causal interactions is not primarily the changing of a thing, but the bringing about of something that afterwards becomes part of a changed thing. Moreover, because powers make causal contributions, and so one does not need to wait until a thing is changed in a certain way to discuss this causal contribution, Scotus envisages differently from Henry the nature of action and passion. For Henry, action and passion need to be related to the final product of a causal interaction, and thus with what suffers the change, the patient; for Scotus, the causal interaction ends not with a thing changed, but with a feature being brought about; thus, action and passion can be related with the relevant powers that bring about the feature. In fact, action and passion are the manifestation of these active and passive powers.

Again, self-motion and self-agency are not different from any other causal interaction. A self-mover or self-agent has an active and passive principle by whose mutual manifestation a feature is brought about. Scotus does not need to appeal to possibilities and potentialities: powers are sufficient for explaining the causal interaction. Compare this with Henry’s ‘hybrid’ explanation of self-motion: he appeals to both the power of the self-mover to bring about something and its potentiality to become changed.

Understanding self-change, causation, and causal powers in this way, Scotus could hardly be persuaded by Henry’s view that a thing that changes itself needs to be the complete origin of what happens to it. Scotus would have pointed out to Henry that it is sufficient for self-change that something can be the ultimate origin of such a change. Indeed, why does Henry make such strong
requirements for the possibility of self-change? At the end of chapter 8, I proposed an answer to this question. I suggested that this view is related to Henry’s understanding of powers: a thing not only has a power; it has multiple ones. Thus, when something comes to exist, when forms are added to forms so that a whole composite is generated, it is not implausible to think that powers are affected too. What was a power with a larger scope becomes a power with a smaller scope, for a feature is added that modifies the scope of the power. If one thinks of powers in this way, one might end up with the view that what acts and suffers cannot be anything other than the final bearer of the powers, for until this bearer is constituted, powers cannot really do anything, and when the bearer is constituted, there is no reason to attribute the action to the powers. However, more research should be done on this issue.


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