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De generatione et corruptione 1.1[1]

<f. 1r>[2]

Prefatory Question.

Whether these books have an object.

Different things please different authors in assigning an object to this science.

For Alexander and Philoponus want the object of this science to be generation and corruption, since that is how the books describe it.

But other authors, who say that the object of the science in *De caelo* is simple body, say that the object of this science is mixed body.

On the other hand, St. Thomas and Albert the Great want the object to be being mobile to form (*ens mobile ad formam*). Moreover, through "being mobile to form" they understand being that is generable, augmentable, and alterable. Through "form" they understand something inhering intrinsically, which can *per se* be the terminus of motion. But in an object of this kind the name must abstract from terminatively and subjectively mobile being. For being that is mobile to substantial form is terminative but being that is mobile to accidental form is subjective.

Nevertheless if we consider what is said in the remaining parts of *Physics*, <f. 1v> the object of this science is easily discovered.

I say, therefore: the object is generable being or body.

This can be gathered from what was said, for the adequate object of physics is being that is mobile according to its substance and essential principles, not according to some property (*passionem*) or accident. Rather, the latter are demonstrated in philosophy of its object.

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[1] Translation is based on Salvador Castellote's transcription (available at http://www.salvadorcastellote.com/investigacion.htm.

[2] Numbers in angle brackets are the manuscript page numbers included in Professor Castellote's transcription.

As a result mobile being in general is assigned as the object of physics. But the assigning of objects for the other parts of philosophy must be done according to the essential division of those kinds into their species having different knowable abstractions.

Moreover, the first division of mobile being is more suitable for dividing sciences. It is that by which it is divided into generable and ingenerable body. For these two members have different knowable *rationes*, as we explained in [our lectures on] the first book of the *Posterior Analytics*.

Therefore, just as the object of the science of the heavens was assigned as ingenerable body, so consequently generable body should be assigned as the object of this science. It will become more evident while refuting the views already presented.

The first of those views has no probability. For just as physics does not concern motion as an object but as a property of an object, so also no part of physics primarily concerns motion or change as an object. Rather, it primarily concerns being as that which is ordered to such motion. Nor does the argument from the title of the books carry any weight, since a book is not always titled after its object, as is clear in the case of *Physics*.

The second opinion is easily excluded, since just as the object of the books *De caelo* is not simple being, so also this object is not mixed body, as will be clear from the discussion of this doctrine. For a large part of it is occupied with the cognition of the elements. For this reason, <f. 2> it should be taken from abstraction. For the heavens have *per se* an abstraction sufficient for constituting one science, and for this reason the science of the heavens does not mix into its object any other things or things brought in by simple bodies.[3] In general, it has some common properties applying to every simple body, through which it is necessary to constitute a special science about it, especially since the substantial principles of generable simple bodies are physically entirely distinct and have a very different abstraction.

On the other hand, the principles of simple and mixed generable things are very much the same, for they agree in a common matter and in a common *ratio* of form. For this reason a division of physics is much more suitable if it is into one science about ingenerable body and another one about generable body.

The third opinion, moreover, either differs only in name from ours or is not true. For when "being mobile to form" is said, one

[3]The Latin of the last part of this sentence ("*neque illatas corporis simplicis*") puzzles me. I suspect there is a textual problem.

either understands that the very proximate disposition to form is the formal *ratio* of the object of this science or one understands that being having such an essence (so that a disposition to those motions flows from it) is the object as such. The former is false. For just as the object of physics is not mobile being as it expresses a property but as it expresses the *ratio* of a property, so also one should not assign some property of some natural being as the formal object of any part of physics. The latter [interpretation] differs only in name from our view. For every generable being has an essence of this kind.

But so far "being mobile to form" in this sense does not properly assign an object to this science.

First, because heaven is a being mobile to form. For it assumes and acquires perfective qualities. Hence, something should be added <f. 2v> to exclude heaven.

Second, because this view presupposes another: namely, that the division of these objects should be taken from the division of motion, and so far that being mobile to where is the object of the books *De caelo*. Yet we will not disprove this here.

Third, because these words suggest that this science only considers in the subject a disposition for a motion tending to a form. And this is the meaning of speaking in that way. Yet this is false. For it belongs to the sciences to consider every property (*proprietates*) of a generable thing, as well as its principles and causes, the number and mixtures of elements, and many other things that are brought to light in the progression of science.

And it is proven by reason:

Because generable being according to its nature is material being. Therefore.

Because a science considering some object considers all its properties and not only those three motions.

It is confirmed: for if it belongs to this science to deal with generable being according to its precise disposition for those motions, then there must be one part dealing with substance and another part with its properties. But there is no such part. Therefore.

But so far the arguments are against our view.

It is argued, first: Science must be of incorruptible and perpetual things. Therefore, it cannot be of generable things.

It is argued, second: This science proves that there is generation. Therefore, there must also be a generable thing. Therefore, this cannot be its object, because there is no science that proves

its own object to be.

It is argued, third: The object of physics as a whole is mobile being. Therefore, the object of a part of physics must be a mobile being of that sort, namely, mobile to form. For the object of a part must be proportionate to the object of the whole.

It is argued, fourth: For if generable being is the object, then any <f. 3> generable being whatever belongs to this science's consideration. Every animate thing, therefore, [belongs to this science's consideration]. But this is false.

It is argued, fifth: What is dealt with in these books [of Aristotle's *Physics*] is not generable being, but generation, corruption, alteration, and augmentation.

I respond to the first argument in the same way as the similar response in the beginning of the *Physics*: corruptible things have properties that apply to them and that can be demonstrated of them. It is not necessary that the object of a science be incorruptible. Rather, the demonstrated propositions must hold forever and be necessary. Their subject can be the object of a science, since they abstract from existence.

To the second argument, it is responded that a science can show *a posteriori* of something that its object exists.

It is said, second, that it cannot show that there is generation, but it can show what it is and in what way it is distinguished from alteration.

It is said, third, that generation is not the subject, but is the way to produce it. Being generable is a property of the subject. Hence, to demonstrate that there is generation is not to demonstrate that the subject is. Rather, this is to show a property (*passionem*) of the subject, which is proper to science.

To the third argument, it is responded that generable being is included under subjectively mobile being, and this is the required proportion between the object of the part and of the whole. For just as mobile being is not taken for an aptitude but rather for describing an essential difference of material being, so also generable being does not imply properties but rather is taken for describing an essential difference of material being from which an aptitude for coming under generation and corruption.

The fourth argument asks that we explain how far <f. 3v> the treatment of this science extends.

To this it should be replied that a science dealing with a generic *ratio* deals with the specific *rationes* contained under the generic *ratio* as long as they are included in the same knowable

abstraction. Animate things, therefore, are included in the object of this science under the common *ratio* of generable and mixed being, but not under their proper *ratio* of animate being. For being animate adds a grade of a higher *ratio* and therefore is under another abstraction, as is clear from what was said in the *Posterior Analytics* I. On the other hand, all inanimate beings are included under their proper *rationes* in the object of this science, since they are all in the same grade of being and have their activity in the same way concerning matter.

It belongs to this science, therefore, to deal with generable being in general and with its properties (*passionibus*), with the elements, with mixtures of them, and with inanimate mixtures.

Hence, these books and the books of *Meteorology* (in which imperfect mixtures are discussed) make one science. Any treatise dealing with the cognition of inanimate mixtures, such as of minerals—about which Albert the Great composed a special book—and similar things, also belongs to the same science.

The fifth argument asks us to explain the order of speaking.

Here it should be noted, first, that two things belong to science. The first is to explain the principles and causes of the object. The second is to demonstrate the properties of the object. And these two things should be done in this science concerning its designated object.

Second, it should be noted that the principles and causes of generable being are already entirely known from what was said about these in *Physics*, where we explained the principles of natural things, <f. 4> which are the same as the principles of generable things. In fact, as we noted there, the principles were explained there in the particular case of generable things because those are better-known to us.

For this reason, then, Aristotle does not repeat the treatment of matter and form, but only deals with substantial generation and motions, which are proper to generable things, and deals with elements and mixtures of them.

Therefore, the order to be kept is this:

First, we will deal with generable being and its generation.

Next, second, with its two affections, namely, alteration and augmentation. For nothing remains that should now be said about motion and its other properties.

But after this, third, in dividing generable being into simple and mixed, we will talk about simple bodies (which are the elements).

Finally, in the last place we will talk about mixture and the mixed things themselves.

Note, then, that this science will contain five or six disputations: first about generable being and its generation, the second about alteration, the third about augmentation, the fourth about the elements, the fifth about mixture and mixed things in general, and in the sixth part we will say a little about mixed things in particular.

In this way this matter will be brought to a close. A different order will not be followed because the one proposed seems more agreeable. Nevertheless, we will always note the place in the *Physics*. A literal commentary on the books of *On Generation and Corruption* will remain from going through the disputations, insofar as it seems necessary for fully acquiring this science.

DISPUTATION I.

On Substantial Generation.

Natural beings and especially generable beings are cognized by us throught mutual transmutation. For this reason, in dealing with generable beings one should deal with their generation and the converse. For one is cognized from the other. In fact, since generation is better known to us, Aristotle deals especially with it and investigates the one principle of generable being through it.

Therefore, we set up this disputation about substantial generation.

Aristotle discusses this material in the first four chapters. In the first two he refutes the opinion of others, and then he presents his own opinion. His opinion seems to include these conclusions:

First conclusion: Substantial generation is possible, for it comes from not being in actuality but being in potentiality.

Second conclusion: The generation of one being is the corruption of another. For this reason generations can always endure.

Third conclusion: Generation can be simpliciter or with qualification. The former is generation of a substance, but the latter of an accident.

Fourth conclusion: Among substantial [generations], some are generations simpliciter (as when a more perfect substance is generated from less perfect substances) and some are with qualification (which is the contrary mode). The same is the case in its way with the generation of accidents.

Fifth conclusion: Generation precedes corruption and corruption follows generation.

Sixth conclusion: Matter that is generated is subjected. For it is a being if related to termini.

Seventh conclusion: Generated and corrupted matter must be the same simpliciter, insofar as it is subject to each form. Nevertheless, in a qualified way it is otherwise insofar as it has different being <f. 5> under different forms.

These are held up to the third chapter.

Eighth conclusion: Generation differs from alteration in that there is generation when a whole is changed to another whole with nothing sensible remaining. But there is alteration when an enduring sensible object changes in its affections.

This is from the fourth chapter.

Quidditative cognition of generation and of a generable thing depends on the cognition of principles and causes. We discussed these more thoroughly in *Physics* I, and therefore only a few things should be added, not repeating any of the things already said.

QUESTION I.

Whether there is substantial generation and corruption and what it is.

Physics I settles this question in the question on the principle in general, where we show that matter and substantial form must necessarily be given. For the conclusion to this question is gathered from that principle.

First conclusion: Substantial generation is given in things.

This is shown from the composition of matter found in these things. For given that these things differ in their substantial forms, it is therefore evident that, if one is transmuted into another, there must be transmutation with respect to substantial form and that this thing—for example, a horse—must be substantially generated and another thing be corrupted.

Since, therefore, it is obvious that one thing is transmuted into another, it is also clear that there is substantial generation.

Hence the ancients who did not recognize physical composition from a subject and accidents <f. 5v> for that reason also did not admit substantial generation.

Wherefore, to the extent that it is evident that there is matter and form in generable things, it is also evident that there is substantial generation.

But someone will say that it does not follow from having posited such substantial composition that such substantial generation is possible, as is clear from the case of the heavens.

It is responded that although generation cannot be immediately inferred from substantial composition alone, [it can be inferred] once experience of sensibles has been assumed, namely, that fire turns into water and water into air.

From this it can clearly be gathered that transmutation does not happen from accidents alone but also from forms constituting a thing in substantial being.

Therefore, Aristotle uses another argument here in chapter 1, confirming that there is generation: namely, that if generation is not possible, then alteration is also not possible. But the consequent is false. Therefore.

But that conditional seems false. For that which is prior is not removed by that which is posterior having been removed. But alteration is prior to generation. Therefore.

And it is confirmed: for in the heavens there is alteration but not generation.

It is confirmed, second: for if we understood the substance of all things to be one, if there were a difference in qualities, we could understand alteration to be possible without generation, as one human being alters another human being although not generating him.

To this it is replied that Aristotle's argument seems to be *ad hominem*, granting what was said by the ancients, for it is not absolutely efficacious in proving that there is substantial generation. For those who deny it consequently deny that alteration is ordered to substantial generation.[4] Rather, [they say it is ordered to] accidental generation.

Second, nevertheless, it is said that that proposition is true.

For which <f. 6> it should be noted that there are certain qualities by the positing of which the union of matter and form is necessarily dissolved.

From this it is gathered that these qualities by their very nature are disposed, instituted, I say, for disposing matter to receive a substantial form.

That conditional proposition, then, should be understood to be about alteration tending to qualities of this sort. And it is verified about those: for such alteration of its nature is ordered to substantial generation just as to an ultimate end, although an extrinsic one. Therefore, just as with the removal of an end all the things that are ordered to the end are removed, so also with the removal of substantial generation alteration is removed. For alteration, although it is posterior in the order of execution, nevertheless is prior in the order of intention. Hence, since generation is impossible, alteration disposing matter to receiving the form of the heavens is also impossible.

This is finally confirmed. For these qualities depend intrinsically on substantial form. Therefore, they cannot be admitted without a change of substantial forms. Therefore, if transmutation with respect to substantial forms is impossible, transmutation according to these properties is also impossible.

You will say that remission of these qualities will at least be possible, which is also proper alteration.

To the contrary, for remission tends to total destruction. Therefore, if the latter is not possible, neither is the former.

But to the contrary, for it does not follow from there not being generation that there is no alteration. Therefore, it also does not

[4] Castellote emended this sentence with the addition of a '*non*'; I omit it.

follow from generation not being possible that alteration is not possible.

It is responded by denying the consequent. For they are related just as means and end. But from the positing of a means, the end does not follow at once. But if an end were not possible, neither would a means be possible.

This is how it is explained by Avicenna in this place; by Giles of Rome in IX, 3, dub. 2; by Marsilius in q. 4; and by [Paul of] Venice in *Summa* c. 13, q. 3, concl. 2.

The second conclusion follows from these things: Generation is change <f. 6v> from non-being simpliciter to being simpliciter and corruption the converse.

Moreover, through "being simpliciter" is understood a complete substantial being. Generation and corruption are distinguished through this from other changes that are accidental. Moreover, it is called change as distinct from creation.

And this is the same as what Aristotle says in his definition: "generation is a change of this whole into that whole," that is of this substance into another substance. This should not be understood in such a way that the whole substance is transmutated so that nothing of it remains under any form, namely, generated and corrupted. Rather, it is said that the whole is changed because an absolutely whole substance is generated and a whole substance is corrupted.

(That the words "no sensible" are rightly introduced will be seen in q. 4.)

But it is argued against this definition: for it follows from this definition that true substantial generation is involved in the creation of the heavens.

This is clear in this way: for there is a true union of matter with form in the case of the heavens. Therefore, one first understands matter, to which the form that is educed from its potentiality advenes. Such a change, then, is generation.

It is responded that in the case of the heavens there is only one action by which the form is created and communicated to the whole. For the matter and form of the heavens are not created except as united. Hence, one should not imagine one action that produces the matter and another action that educes the form from a potentiality of the matter. Rather, the heavens are created by one action, both the parts with their mutual union and the dependency of one on the other. But that action does not count as generation, since it does not come about from a presupposed

subject.

So far some doubts remain here, however.

The first is how some substantial generations can be simpliciter and others with qualification. For every substances is a being simpliciter. Therefore, every generation of a substance is a generation simpliciter. Likewise with corruption.

It is responded that the question in fact only concerns names.

Hence, it is said <f. 7> that in the same way in which a substance is called a being simpliciter its production is also a generation simpliciter. Nevertheless, Aristotle's way of speaking holds true with respect to a certain comparison. For if that which is less perfect is compared to that which is more perfect, the former is as it were a non-being. And to aqcquire an imperfect thing with the loss of a perfection is, simpliciter, not to acquire but to lose. In that way of speaking, then, when a more imperfect thing begins to exist as a result of the corruption of a more perfect thing, it is not deemed a generation simpliciter but rather a corruption. For that which was lost is better than that which was acquired.

The second doubt concerns how the generation of one substance is the corruption of another when they have different definitions.

It is responded that the sense is that whenever one form is introduced to one matter, a contrary form must be expelled.

The reason is that the matter can neither have multiple forms nor have no forms.

Hence, it is not necessary for the truth of that proposition that only one thing be generated as a result of the corruption of one thing. It is possible that multiple things be generated, if different forms are induced in different parts of the matter. It is also possible for one thing to be generated from the corruption of multiple things, if the same form is induced in all of the matter [of those things].

An example of each is when a mixture is resolved into its elements and when a mixture is generated from mixing elements. Strictly speaking, it is not necessary that some thing simpliciter be generated from a corrupted thing nor that a new form be educed from a potentiality of the matter. Rather, it is sufficient that some form be introduced into that matter, whether through generation or through aggeneration, as happens with the ingestion of food, which is converted into the substance of the one being nourished.

From these things it follows:

First, that the sense of that proposition is causal and not formal. For generation and corruptions are different changes, yet one comes about as a result of the other.

And this is the sense <f. 7v> of the proposition, which is also annotated in the *Physics*. It is also the common sense of the doctors: Giles of Rome, Marsilius, Albert, and Nifo here; St. Thomas in II, dist. 34, art. 2, and *De veritate* q. 29, art. 2 and 6 in the body, and *ST* I.94.1 ad 5; Cajetan in II.13.6 ad 2, and Ferrariensis in *SCG* II.

But enough has been said about this in its place.

Second, it follows that that proposition is verified in the case of substantial generation and corruption but not in the case of alteration. For it is possible to acquire a quality without losing another. The proposition can, however, be verified in the case of those alterations which happen between contraries. For [in those cases] the introduction of one quality is the exclusion of another thing.

But there is a third doubt. If generation and corruption follow on each other, which of them is prior? Which is posterior?

For Aristotle seems to grant that generation comes about as a result of corruption and that corruption is prior.

The contrary, however, seems to be true: generation and corruption are simultaneous in time. For in the same measure in which the generated thing begins, the corrupted thing ceases to be. The first being of the generated thing is the first non-being of the corrupted thing.

Nor is it necessary to grant another instant in which the thing is, whatever Giles of Rome may say. To refer to his opinion would take too log. For he says that for any thing whatever there is given a duration of intrinsic being in which there is given an instant in which the thing first is and another of cessation in which it last is.[5] From this it clearly follows that in that instant the matter has two forms.

That argument suffices for opposing this opinion. Generation and corruption, then, exist in the same instant, for the first instant of non-being for the corrupted thing is the first instant of being for the generated thing. For corruption is like a privation in becoming and is not a positive change, as was said elsewhere.

[5]It is unclear to me how to read the Latin of this sentence: "*Dicit enim quod in quacumque re datur duratio intrinseci esse in qua datur instans in quo primo fit, et aliud desitionis in quo ultimo sit.*"

By reason of this simultaneity, it is said that generated things and corrupted things are contiguous in duration. This contiguity does not consist in the fact that they are simultaneous but in the fact that one immediately follows after the other, as we said.

Second, we say that generation is prior by nature to corruption and the contrary in different genera of causes. For generation is prior in the genera of efficient and formal causes. The agent causes the corruption through generation as through a first action, and the form of the produced thing formally expells the form of the corrupted thing. On the other hand, in the genus of dispositive cause, which is reduced to the material [cause], corruption is prior to generation. In order to introduce a form a necessary disposition, as it were, of the matter is the expulsion of the other form, which in a certain way happens through preceding dispositions.

For more about this, see q. 4.

From these things a fourth doubt is resolved, which here can be whether the power to generate is introduced in the nature on account of corruption or whether, the other way around, corruption is followed *per accidens*.

There is a reason for doubting. It seems to be for this reason that natures are not lacking the power to generate things similar to themselves, because otherwise they could not conserve the species without a succession of individuals on account of their corruptibility.

Hence we see that a power of this kind is not attributed to incorruptible things.

From this it seems to follow that such a power to generate is introduced in order to restore the nature from corruption. <f. 8>

But the contrary is the case. Corruption follows *per accidens* from the generation of another thing. Therefore, the power to generate is prior to corruptibility. For this reason, such a power is not given in order to repair the harm of corruption. Rather, that evil follows *per accidens* on that good [of generation].

It is responded, first, that a power of this kind was introduced to nature on account of the good that is bestowed to nature itself. For it is essentially good to act and communicate its perfection. Corruption follows *per accidens* from this beyond the intention of nature.

Second, it was introduced on account of a kind of imperfection in the *ratio* of being generable, namely, because the perfection of the whole species shines perfectly in one individual, but

it is maximally shown in the multiplication of individuals and in their diverse perfection, in the miraculous way in which one thing generates something similar to itself.

But an incorruptible thing does not need the power to generate, since the species is more perfectly represented in any given individual, nor can such a power be conferred on it by reason of its incorruptibility.

Third, a power of this kind was introduced so that corruptible things can be perpetuated. For considering the nature of those things intrinsically, they have a dissoluble composition and for that reason are corruptible of themselves (having set aside the relation to generations).

A human being is corruptible because the form is united to matter through dispositions which can be lost—we understand corrupted—even apart from the generation of another human being, as when a man kills himself, not because death tends to the introduction of another form, but because it removes the disposition necessary for the conservation of the human being.

For these reasons, then, the power of generating is introduced into nature. But the power to corrupt and corruptibility itself were not directly intended by nature, but followed *per accidens* from the imperfection of nature.

From these things, the last doubt is resolved, namely, whether corruption is natural or preternatural. It should be said that in attending to the natural order of things and of the whole universe, corruption can be called natural, since it necessarily follows in nature. But if the inclination of the natural thing that is corrupted is considered, corruption is absolutely preternatural.

But to the contrary. For Aristotle in *Physics* IX and *Of Meteors* I divides corruption into natural and violent corruptions and divides generation likewise.

It is replied, however, that with natural things and especially with living things, generations and corruptions have determinate periods. For a human being is generated after forty days after insemination, is born after nine months, and has the fixed time of their generations.

The same is true in the case of corruption. For a human being naturally lives only for so and so long, as long as the natural heat can be conserved in his power of radical moisture.

Aristotle, therefore, in the stated place, calls those generations natural that happen for a time determined by nature. But

those that are hastened or slowed down by some violence are called preternatural. This is not with respect to the generated thing but with respect to the natural order. That is, having been made without order or with the order of nature.

Hence, when a human being dies <f. 9v> in old age, it is called a natural death. But when killed by force, the death is called violent. Nevertheless, if we attend to the inclination of the one living, either corruption is violent.