

19. *The Salvation, “Metaphysics”*

Second Treatise

1. Explaining the Senses of Necessary and Possible

[1] The necessarily existent is the existent, which when posited as not existing, an absurdity results. The possibly existent is the one that, when posited as either existing or not existing, no absurdity results. The necessarily existent is the existence that *must be*, whereas the possibly existent is the one that has no “must” about it in any way, whether in terms of its existence or nonexistence. (This is what we mean by “possibly existent” in this context, although “possibly existent” sometimes means “in potency,” and “possible” is sometimes said of anything that in fact exists, as has been detailed in logic.)

[2] Next, the necessarily existent may exist through itself or not through itself. What is necessarily existent through itself is that which is owing to itself, not to any other thing, that is, [not to another] thing that, positing its nonexistence, results in an absurdity. The necessarily existent not through itself is that which becomes necessarily existent if something other than it is set down. For example, four exists necessarily not through itself but only when positing two plus two; and burning exists necessarily not through itself but only when positing contact between the natural active power and the natural passive power; I mean, what causes burning and what is burned.

2. The Necessary through Itself Cannot Be Necessary through Another, and the Necessary through Another Is What Is Possible

[1] One thing cannot exist simultaneously as necessary through itself and necessary through another. For if the other is removed or its existence not considered,

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it must be the case that either the necessity of its existence remains unchanged, and so the necessity of its existence is not through another, or the necessity of its existence does not remain, and so the necessity of its existence is not through itself.

[2] Whatever exists necessarily through another exists possibly in itself. [This is] because the necessity of the existence of whatever exists necessarily through another is a consequence of a given association and relation, but consideration of the association and relation is different from consideration of the thing itself that has an association and relation. Thus, it is only by considering this association that the necessity of the existence can be determined.

[3] In terms of the thing itself on its own, it is something that must exist necessarily, possibly or impossible. Now it cannot be something that must exist impossible, because anything whose existence is impossible through itself is neither through itself nor through another. Nor is it something that must exist necessarily, for we have already said that whatever exists necessarily through itself simply cannot have the necessity of its existence through another. So it remains that with respect to the thing itself, it exists possibly; with respect to introducing the association with that other, it exists necessarily; and with respect to disrupting the association with that other, it exists impossible. It itself, however—in itself without condition—exists possibly.

3. Whatever Is Not Necessary Does Not Exist

[1] It is now clear that what exists necessarily through another exists possibly through itself. This is convertible. Thus, everything existing possibly in itself—if indeed its existence has occurred—exists necessarily through another. [This follows] because either it in fact has actual existence or it does not. It is absurd, however, that it not in fact have actual existence [when it indeed exists], otherwise its existence would be impossible. So it remains that it in fact has actual existence. In that case, its existence is either necessary

or not necessary. If its existence is not necessary, and so it is still possible existence, then its existence is not distinguished from its nonexistence and there is no difference between this state in it and the first state. [This follows] because before existing it was possible existence, and its present state is the same as it was. If one posits that a new state comes to be, then concerning that state the question stands, namely, does it exist possibly or necessarily?

[2] If it is possible, and that state before was itself also possible, then nothing new came to be, whereas if the existence [of the new state] is necessary and it is made necessary for the first [possible existent], then the existence of a state has been made necessary for this first. But that [new] state is nothing other than the emergence [of the thing] into existence, so [it is] its emergence into existence that is necessary.

[3] Finally, the existence of whatever exists possibly is either through itself or through some given cause. If it is through itself, then it itself exists necessarily not possibly. If it is through a cause, then either its existence is necessary together with the existence of the cause, or it would stay the way it was before the existence of the cause, which is absurd. It must be the case, then, that its existence is together with the existence of the cause. So, whatever exists possibly through itself exists necessarily through another.

4. The Necessary Existent's Perfection and Unity and That Two Things Inseparable with Respect to Existence Are Equivalent with Respect to It and So Both Have an External Cause

[1] A single necessary existent can neither come to be from two, nor is there multiplicity in the necessary existent in any way. There cannot be two things, where this one is not that one, and that one is not this one, and each one is necessary through itself and through the other. [This is so since] (1) it has already been made clear that the necessary existent through itself is not through another. [This also follows since] (2) neither one of them can exist necessarily through the other, such that *x* exists necessarily through *y* and not through itself, and *y* exists necessarily through *x* and not through itself, and yet their totality is a single necessary existent. [That is so] because considering them

as two entities is different from considering them as two *relata*. [In the latter case] each one of them has a necessary existence that is not through itself, and so each one of them exists possibly in itself. Now everything that exists possibly in itself has a cause for its existence that is prior to it, because every cause is prior to the effect with respect to its own existence, even if it is not [prior] with respect to time. Thus, in itself, each one of [the *relata*] has another thing by means of which it subsists, which is prior to it itself; however, according to what we described, neither of them itself is prior to the other. So, then, both have causes external to them and prior to them. Therefore, each one's necessary existence is not derived from the other, but rather from the external cause that occasions the attachment between them.

[2] Again, in the case of anything that is necessary through another, its very existence is posterior to the existence of that other and is dependent upon it. It is, then, impossible for one entity *x*, to depend for its existence upon another entity *y*, where *y* exists through *x*. It would be as though it depends for its existence on its very own existence! In summary form, when *y* is necessary through *x*, *x* is prior to [*y*, which is] prior to [*x*], and [*x*] dependent upon [*y*, which is] dependent upon [*x*]. So the existence of both is absurd.

[3] <So, on the one hand, if *x* has its own existence through itself, then it has no need for the other, *y*. On the other hand, if *x* does not exist until *y* exists, and *y* exists only after *x* exists, then the existence of *x* is dependent upon something that exists after its very own existence, and so its existence is absurd.>

5. On the Simplicity of the Necessary

[1] We also say it cannot be the case that the necessary existent has principles that are gathered together and the necessary existent is constituted of them. [In other words], it has neither quantitative parts nor the parts of a definition and account, whether they are like the matter and form, or in any other way as the parts of the account explaining the sense of its name, where each one of them would indicate something that is different essentially from the other with respect to the existence. That is because with anything described thus, each of its parts is neither the same as any other part

nor the same as the composite. So either each of its two parts, for instance, can exist independently, but the composite cannot exist apart from them, and so the composite would not exist necessarily. Or one of them can [exist necessarily], but the composite cannot exist apart from it, and then neither the composite nor the other parts can exist independently, and so again [the necessary existent] would not exist necessarily. But it is precisely the necessary existent that can exist necessarily! If those parts cannot exist separately from the whole, and the whole cannot exist separately from the parts, but the existence of each one is attached to another and neither is essentially prior, then none of it exists necessarily. I have already explained this, that is, the parts are essentially prior to the whole, and so the cause necessitating existence would first necessitate the parts and then the whole, and none of them would exist necessarily. We cannot say that the whole is essentially prior to the parts, and so it is either later or simultaneous—how could it be?!—since then it would not exist necessarily.

[2] From this it has become clear that what exists necessarily is not a body, nor any matter of a body, nor a form of a body, nor an intelligible matter of an intelligible form, nor an intelligible form in an intelligible matter, nor divisible—whether in quantity, principles, or account—and so it is one from these three perspectives.

12. The Proof of the Necessarily Existent

[1] Undoubtedly there is existence, and all existence is either necessary or possible. If it is necessary, then in fact there is a necessarily existent being, which is what is sought. If it is possible, then we will show that the existence of the possible terminates in a necessarily existent being. Before that, however, we will advance some premises.¹

[2] These include that at any one and the same time there cannot be for anything that is possible [in] itself a cause that is itself possible *ad infinitum*. This is because all of them exist either all together or they do not.

1. Only one is advanced here, but additional ones are advanced in the next chapter.

If they do not exist all together but rather one after another, there is no infinite at one and the same time—but let us defer discussion of this for now. As for their existing all together, and none is a necessarily existing being, then either the totality, insofar as it is that totality, whether finite or infinite, exists necessarily through itself or possibly in itself. If, on the one hand, the totality exists necessarily through itself, but each one of its members is something possible, then what exists necessarily subsists by means of things that exist possibly, which is absurd. On the other hand, if the totality is something existing possibly in itself, then the totality needs for existence something that provides existence, which will be either external or internal to the totality.

[3] If it is something internal to it, then one of its members is something existing necessarily, but each one of them exists possibly—so this is a contradiction. Or it is something existing possibly and so is a cause of the totality's existence, but a cause of the totality is primarily a cause of the existence of its members, of which it is one. Thus, it would be a cause of its own existence, which is impossible. Despite this impossibility, if it is correct, it is in a certain way the very thing that is sought; for anything that is sufficient to necessitate itself is something existing necessarily, but it was [assumed] not to exist necessarily, so this is a contradiction.

[4] The remaining option is that [what gives existence to the totality] is external to it, but it cannot be a possible cause, since we included every cause existing possibly in this totality. So since [the cause] is external to it, it also is something existing necessarily in itself. Thus, things existing possibly terminate in a cause existing necessarily, in which case not every [effect] that exists as something possible will have simultaneously with it a cause that exists as something possible, and so an infinite number of causes existing at a single time is impossible.

13. That Possibly Existents Cannot Be Causes of One Another in a Circular Fashion at One and the Same Time If They Are Finite

[1] Furthermore, the causes cannot be finite in number when each of them exists possibly in itself but is necessary through another to the point that one reaches the other circularly.

[2] So let us advance another premise. To set down a finite number of possible existents, each one of which is a cause of the others in a circle, is as absurd and obvious as the first problem. Particular to it, however, is that each one of them would be a cause and an effect of its own existence, where *x* comes into existence from *y* only after *y* itself comes into existence, but anything whose existence depends on the existence of what exists only after its own later existence cannot exist.

[3] Any case of two *relata*, however, is not like this. For the two exist simultaneously, and the existence of one of them is not dependent such that it must be after the existence of the other. Rather, the cause productive of them and necessitating them produces them both simultaneously. If one of them has a priority and the other a posteriority, like father and son, and if its priority is not with respect to the relation, then its priority is with respect to existence itself. However, the two are simultaneous with respect to the relation that is present after the occurrence of the thing. If the father's existence were to depend on the son's existence and the son's existence were to depend on the father's existence, and moreover the two were not simultaneous but one of them is essentially after, then neither one of them would exist. The absurdity is not that the existence of what is simultaneous with a thing is a condition for the thing's existence; rather, the absurdity is that it is an existence from and after that thing.

18. How the Necessary Existent through Itself Intellects Itself and Things

[1] It is absolutely inconceivable that the Necessary Existent would intellect things by way of things. Otherwise, (1) It would subsist inasmuch as it intellects—and so It would subsist by means of the things; or (2) Its intellecting would be accidental to It—and so It would not exist necessarily in every way. This is absurd, since if there were no external things, [the Necessary Existent] would not exist unless It had a state resulting not from Itself but from another, in which case the other would have an effect on It. The axioms set down earlier invalidate this and anything like it.

[2] Now, because [the Necessary Existent] is a principle of all existence (as we will explain), It intellects

by way of Itself anything of which it is a principle, and It is a principle of both existents that are complete in themselves, as well as those things that are subject to generation and corruption, as species first, and, by way of that, as individuals.

[3] In another way, however, It cannot be something intellecting, at a given time and at the level of the individual, these things that change, as they are changing, inasmuch as they are things changing; instead, It intellects them in another manner that we will explain. For It could not be the case that at one time It intellects one of them as an existing, not a non-existent thing, and at another time intellects it as a non-existent thing, where each of these is a unique form for the intellect and neither form remains with the other, [since] then the Necessary Existent would Itself be subject to change.

[4] Moreover, if the things subject to corruption can be intellected as abstracted essence and as an unindividuated thing following from that, then they cannot be intellected as corruptible. If they can be perceived as something joined to matter and material accidents, and a given moment, and individuated, then they are not objects of the intellect but rather of the senses and the imaginative faculty. We have already explained in other books that we perceive any form derived from the senses as an object of the senses, and we imagine any form derived from the imagery only through a particular organ.

[5] The assertion that the Necessary Existent has multiple acts of intellecting is just as faulty as the assertion that It has multiple acts. In point of fact, the Necessary Existent intellects everything only universally, but nevertheless no individual thing escapes Its notice: "not even the weight of a dust speck, whether in the heavens or on Earth, escapes His notice."² This is one of those wonders that require a subtle genius to understand.

19. How the Necessary Existent Intellects Things

[1] In answer to how this is possible, it is because when [the Necessary Existent] intellects Itself, and It

2. A quotation from the Qur'ān, 10:61 and 37:11.

intellects that It is the principle of everything that exists, It intellects the first principles of existent things as well as whatever is engendered out of them. Now nothing comes to exist unless it has already become in one respect necessary by reason of some cause—we have already explained this³—and then these causes interact with one another until particular things come to exist as a result.

[2] The First [i.e., the Necessary Existent] knows the causes and the things coinciding with them and so necessarily knows what they result in, the times between them, and their recurrences. Since It cannot know *this* or *that*,⁴ It is aware of particular things insofar as they are universal—I mean inasmuch as they have attributes. If [those attributes] are unique to [one particular thing] as an individual, and so bear relation to an individual time or an individual state, then, if that state were to be understood as those attributes, it would be on par with [those attributes];⁵ however, since [the state] is attributable to principles, the species of each one of which is confined to its one individual, the [species] would be attributable to an individual thing.

[3] Now we have already said that as a result of such attribution, we can provide the individuals with a description and a characterization limited to them. So if that individual is one of those things that, in the intellect, is also individual, then the intellect has a way of arriving at that described thing, that is, the individual alone in its species, unique of its kind, like the sphere of the Sun, for example, or Jupiter. When its [species] is distributed among individuals, however, the intellect has no way to describe that thing until it has been pointed out.

[4] To begin with what you have learned, which we will reiterate, we say this is similar to the fact that, since you know all the heavenly motions, you know each eclipse and each particular conjunction and opposition, but in a universal way. [That follows] because you say about a given eclipse that there will be

an eclipse after the time of such and such a planet's northerly motion from such and such a place by such and such a degree, when part of the Moon comes to be in opposition to such and such a planet, when such and such a period of time elapses between [this eclipse] and a similar eclipse previous or later to it, and that account is so similar for those two other eclipses⁶ that not a single accidental aspect of those eclipses remains unknown to you. However, you know it as a universal due to the fact that this account can apply to many eclipses, each one of which is the same as that one, but arguably it is only that single eclipse itself that you know. This does not dispel the universality, however, if you recall what we said before.

[5] Despite all of this, however, you may not be able to judge that this eclipse exists or does not exist *at this instant*, unless you recognize the particulars of the motions by sensory observation and you know the period of time between this observed eclipse and that eclipse. This is not the same as your recognizing that among motions there is one particular motion matching the description of what you observed, and that there is such and such a difference between it and the other eclipse. You may be able to know that according to this kind of knowledge [i.e., universally], but not know it in relation to a given moment, and so you ask whether it exists [at that given moment]. Instead, you have to have obtained by sensory observation something physically identifiable [in space and time] in order for you to know the present occurrence of that eclipse.

[6] If there is something that prevents calling this a recognition of the particular from its universal, [we] will not fight it, since our present aim concerns something else, namely, indicating how you know and perceive particular things in a way that changes the knower, and how you know and perceive in a way that does not change the knower. For when (1) you know eclipses as something understood as a universal, or as existing always, or (2) your knowledge is not of eclipses taken absolutely but of every eclipse that comes to be and then whether that eclipse exists or not, neither in-

3. *The Salvation*, “Metaphysics,” 2.3.

4. That is, the things to which one can physically point.

5. That is, it would be an individual state, or a state belonging to an individual.

6. That is, the one before and the one after it.

roduces any change in you. For in the two states⁷ your knowledge is the same, namely, that there is an eclipse with certain characteristics after such and such an eclipse or after the Sun is in such and such a house of the zodiac and at such and such an alignment, where such and such is after it, and after it is such and such. This act of intellecting on your part is consistent, before that eclipse, while it is occurring, and afterwards. If you introduce time into that, however, then at one given moment you know that this eclipse does not exist, and then at another given moment you know that it does exist, in which case your knowledge of the former [state, i.e., the eclipse's nonexistence] does not remain when the eclipse exists; rather, a different knowledge comes about after the change we just indicated. At the moment the [eclipse] passes, you cannot be what you were before the passing. This is because you are temporal and exist at a present moment.

7. Not the two states of existing or not existing, but of knowing eclipses absolutely or in terms of *every* eclipse (with the additional conditions listed).

[7] As for the First [i.e., the Necessary Existent], Who does not enter into any time and its status, it is completely inconceivable to apply to Him any status concerning this time or that time, as being in it or as a new temporal status or temporal knowledge being applied to it. Know that you came to perceive particular eclipses only because you fully comprehended its causes and everything concerning the heavens. When full comprehension takes place about all of the causes in things and their existence, there is a transference [of that full comprehension] from those to all of the effects.

[8] We will explain this further through an investigation added to our earlier explanation, so that you will know how we know what is unseen. From these two explanations, you will know how the First knows everything from Itself on account of the fact that It is a principle of a thing that in turn is a principle of one or more things that have a state and motion that are such and such, and that what results from them is such, down to the very last difference after which one cannot differentiate further, and then according to the combination that follows that differentiation with the inevitability of corruption following generation. These things are the keys to what is unseen.

20. The Cure, "Metaphysics"

Sixth Treatise

Chapter I. The Division of Causes and Their Dispositions

We have spoken about the nature of substances and accidents, and about the relation of priority and pos-

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teriority in them, and about the knowledge of the agreement between definitions and the things defined, universal as well as particular. It is fitting that we speak now about cause and that which is caused, since they are also among the consequences which belong to that which exists insofar as it exists.

The causes, as you have heard, are: form, element [matter], agent, and purpose. We say: By the formal cause we have in mind the cause which is part of the subsistence of something, through which the thing is what it is in actuality. By the elemental [cause we have in mind] the cause which is part of the subsistence of