Virtual being is an essential feature of **Thomas Aquinas'** solution to *problem of the status of the elements* within the mixed body.

A successful solution must be able to:

- distinguish the *mixed body* from the *aggregate* while avoiding the total corruption of the elements

- explain the *recoverability* of the elements, e.g., through the dissolution of the mixed body

- be plausibly attributable to Aristotle, whose opinion on this matter is unclear

Possible solutions

- elements persist actually and substantially (Avicenna)

- elements persist *substantially* but *potentially* (Averroes)

- elements persist *virtually*, that is, by their power (Aquinas)

Objections to solutions involving *substantial presence*

- if *substantially* and *actually* present, then the mixed body can't be distinguished from the aggregate

- if *substantially* and *potentially* present, then the elements, absurdly, would have to be capable of intensifying and remitting with respect to their substantiality

Aquinas' solution: *virtual presence*, or present *by their power*

- the elementary qualities, e.g., *hot* and *cold*, are expressions of the affective *power* of the substantial forms of the elements

- the qualities proper to the mixed body are constituted out of the elementary qualities, e.g., as *warm* is constituted out of *hot* and *cold*

- therefore, the elements are preserved in the mixed body virtually, that is, by their powers, inasmuch as the qualities proper to the mixed body are constituted out of the elementary qualities

Objections to *virtual being as a solution* to the problem

- it is insufficient to account for the recoverability of the elements

- it appears to entail the *total corruption of the elements* and therefore does not preserve the notion of "mixed body"

- it is based upon a misreading of Aristotle, whose primary interest is to distinguish *mixing* from *generation* as distinct modes of coming-to-be