The essence of a thing consists in its being rendered intelligible by being regarded from a certain general point of view. This gives it an intellectual nutritiousness. For instance, I may be shown a complicated piece of machinery, and while recognizing how many parts of it must or may move together, I may be utterly at a loss to understand it, or to discern what kind of a machine it is until someone tells me what purpose it is intended to subserve. Then I see. That I see gives it a function, an office in the world. But the essence does no more than determine the generic mode of being of the thing.

References: MS [R] 200:51
Date of Quote: 1907
Editorial Annotations: From an alternative draft
URL: http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-fourth-curiosity-22