

1-1-1971

# The Multiplicity and Individuality of Intellects: A Re-examination of St. Thomas' Reaction to Averroes

Howard P. Kainz

Marquette University, [howard.kainz@marquette.edu](mailto:howard.kainz@marquette.edu)

## THE MULTIPLICITY AND INDIVIDUALITY OF INTELLECTS: A RE-EXAMINATION OF ST. THOMAS' REACTION TO AVERROES \*

SUMMARIUM. — *Sicut demonstrat S. Thomas, non constat Averrois interpretatio "separabilitatis" intellectus possibilis cum principiis Aristotelis. Solutio autem aristotelico-thomistica, quod intellectus possibilis multiplicatur secundum multiplicationem substantiae ipsius animae, inducit ad quaestiones de obiectivitate et de communicatione; quarum solutio facilius forte redderetur per quamdam hypothesim intellectus communis in sensu non-averroistico.*

The question of whether all men share the same intellect, or, on the contrary, all have their own individual intellects, is a problem which reached its zenith in the middle ages, but still has its modern counterparts, e.g. in that idealism which couches everything in terms of an absolute knowing ego, as opposed to that empiricism which reduces knowledge itself to sense impressions and particular concrete images constructed mystically, God knows how, into fodder for intelligent speech. This problem, in whatever dress it may appear, is not merely psychological or ontological in nature, but has overtones and ramifications in the epistemological sphere. For it is through the intellect that we purport to attain knowledge, and truth. And the answer that men give to the question, "what is truth?" will be essentially dependent on their attitude towards the intellect itself — on whether they consider "intellect" to be an intrinsic element in human individuality, or something mysteriously out of its reach.

\* Bibliography: ARISTOTLE, *De Anima*, "The Basic Works of Aristotle", McKeon Ed., Random, N. Y., 1961; *Physics and Metaphysics*, McKeon Ed.; *De Anima*, Loeb. Ed., W. S. Hett tr., London, Heinemann, 1957. — IMMANUEL BEKKER, *Aristotelis Opera*, Oxford, 1887. — AVERROES CORDUBENSIS, *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima Libros*, Wolfson, Baneth, and Fobes Eds., The Mediaeval Academy of America, Cambridge, Mass., 1953, Vol. VI, Part. 1. — S. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Arist. Libr. de Anima Comm.*, Pirootta Ed., Marietti, 1957; *Summa Theologiae*, "Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos", Madrid, 1961; *Exp. in VIII Libr. Phys. Arist. (Opera omnia*, Vives ed.), Paris, 1880, Vol. 22; *Comm. in Quatuor Libr. Sent. P. Lombardi*, Vives, Voll. 7-11; *Quaes. Disp. de Spirit. Creaturis*, Vives, Vol. 12; *De Virtutibus in Comuni*, Vives, Vol. 14; *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas Parisienses*, Vives, Vol. 27. — S. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *In Libr. XIII Metaph.*, Geyer Ed., Aschendorff, 1964. — ETIENNE GILSON, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Random House, N. Y., 1965. — W. D. ROSS, *Aristotle*, Meridian, Ohio, 1961; *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951.

If there are as many intellects as there are men, and if each man has a peculiar ontological status or position which cannot be duplicated — then the community of men would seem to be like a group of artists sitting in a studio at different positions: Even if they are trying to reproduce the same, identical model, the reproductions are bound to differ according to the difference of their vantage points. In this case, which one of the reproductions could we call “true”? Would not each one of them, in so far as it produces any feature or facet of the model, be “true”, as long as it is *valid*? In this case, truth would seem to be purely subjective, and the criterion of truth in the community would seem to be the mere subjective judgement by one man as to whether another man’s view *jibes* with his own.

If, on the other hand, there were one intellect for all men, then truth would seem to be like the privileged position of a radio sports announcer: As he calls the plays in the sporting event or game that is going on before him, he no doubt excites an indefinitely varied number of combinations of phantasms and impressions in the minds of his radio audience. But those in the radio audience who are dependent upon the sportscaster for information, do not *see* what is taking place. If there is any truth in the impressions of this audience, it must be essentially dependent on the primary and immediate view of the sportscaster. Therefore “truth” would have to reside essentially with him. Truth would be separate. All other truths would stand or fall precisely to the extent that they participate in, that they in some way reproduce, this one individual truth. Truth would be purely *objective* for the whole human audience — in the sense that it is purely separate in their regard.

The human soul, Aristotle tells us,<sup>1</sup> is like an “instrument of instruments”, i. e., a primary means which is in some way directed towards our use of some other means, some other instrument. And this “instrumentality” would seem to apply particularly to the intellectual functions of the soul (whether these be from within or without) — since, as Aristotle says,<sup>2</sup> all natural things and functions are teleologically ordered to form; and since, just as in vegetative things their proper formality lies in their life (*vivere viventibus est esse*<sup>3</sup>), so also, in beings with intelligence, their proper formality would lie in their thought, their *intelligere*.

Granted then that the intellect is in some way the primary and most important instrument of man, our view of the nature of the intellect will in some way affect our view of its instrumentality, and consequently, also our *use* of it as an instrument:

Those who would conceive the intellect as something completely individual, and autonomous, and spontaneous — would seem to attribute to man’s intellect a true efficient causality, an instrumentality which is *determining*, rather than *determined*. The intellect would be, in such a case, like the file which is used to sharpen the saw. Just as the effectiveness of the saw, in this case, would hinge on the determination of “acuity” which it received from the file: so also, the intelligibility or meaningfulness of ideas would be directly proportional to the

<sup>1</sup> *De Anima*, III, 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 3, 415 b, 15 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, II, 4, 415 b, 13.

character of "universality" with which they are actively imbued by the intellect. (In modern philosophy, Kant seems to exemplify such a view).

Those, however, who would conceive the intellect as something outside of, and separate from, individual men — would seem to relegate to man's intellect a kind of passive, i. e. receptive, instrumentality — something more in the genus of material causality than efficient causality. That is, it would not be an instrument in the primary sense of that word, but an instrument in the sense that a receptacle is an instrument. The individual human intellect, on this latter view, would be a *tabula rasa* in the narrowest sense of that expression. All spontaneity and activity would come from outside the individual man. Likewise, intellectual illumination would be something completely extrinsic, which would be needed to render the confused and disordered *phantasms* of man universalized and intelligible. Here we would have the case of a man not actively "making" his ideas, but rather standing in relation to them as purely potential to, or receptive of, them: "being made" by them, rather than making them. (Berkeley and Spinoza seem to exemplify such a view, in so far as they reduced thought directly to the agency of God).

Insofar as the intellect is conceived as individual and active, we salvage subjectivity and freedom, but we raise problems about the possibility of communication; insofar as we conceive the intellect to be separate from individual men, we salvage the objectivity of truth and perhaps the possibility of communication — but we sacrifice the independence of individual subjectivities. When the former position is carried to an extreme, one finds himself at least in the vicinity of the "egocentric dilemma". If, on the other hand, the latter position were overemphasized (not many currents in contemporary Western philosophy find this position attractive), the result would be a submerging of individual subjectivities in some massive universal ego — or a reasonable facsimile. We will elaborate further on the implications of these two extremes in the conclusion to this paper. But suffice it to say for the present that the doctrine on the intellect which was developed by Thomas Aquinas represented at least an instinctive reaction against both these extremes. In other words, his efforts were oriented towards salvaging both maximal spontaneity and maximal receptivity for the human intellect.

It will be purpose of this paper a) to show how Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle, reacted against the latter extreme mentioned above (as represented by the position of Averroes), and tried to restore a reciprocity between the two opposite aspects of intellect *within* man; and b) to evaluate the significance of this "restoration".

As a preliminary to this examination, to better place it in its proper frame of reference, we shall first give a summary of the general doctrine of Aristotle on the nature and functions of the soul, as presented in his *De Anima*; then we shall cite what seems to be explicit and unambiguous in Aristotle's doctrine as to the nature of the intelligence, or the intellective part of the soul.

After this we shall proceed to Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine; and Thomas Aquinas' refutation of Averroes and counter-interpretation. Finally, we shall consider the implications of this counter-interpretation.

## 1. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DOCTRINE ON THE SOUL IN THE "DE ANIMA".

In *De Anima* II, 3,<sup>4</sup> Aristotle states that it is possible to formulate a common definition of the soul, a definition which applies communally and without exception to all the different kinds of soul. Such a definition would be like the definition of a "figure" which would apply equally to all the different kinds of figures, without specifying any one of the different kinds. If we define a figure as a "point drawn out", extended, to describe any kind of a sensible shape" — this would not give us an imaginary picture of a triangle, or a circle, or a pentagon. But it would, of itself, give us an *idea* of the essential constituents common to all these particular types of figures.

The communal definition of the soul, which applies equally to the soul of a tree and the soul of a man, is "the first act of a natural organic body".<sup>5</sup> The soul is that ultimate principle of unity which holds all of a diversity of organic parts together,<sup>6</sup> and causes them to work together for a common end.<sup>7</sup> And the composite which is thus unified by the soul has a dual aspect: 1) In so far as it is organic, and corporeal (which, in Aristotle's terminology, is the same as being "potential") — it must be subject to all kinds of motions, or physical stimuli, impinging on it from sources in the physical environment in which it finds itself. In so far as it has a unity which goes beyond the mere mathematical unity of an inorganic continuum, and consequently an activity which is somehow superior to the purely passive and transient motions transmitted through the various elemental physical parts, — it is characterized by activities, the intangible spontaneity of life: thus it is a self-mover, a self-changer<sup>8</sup>. Therefore the *body*, the material part, of the living thing, is always found to be complex, consisting from a variety of material parts, of corporeal receptivities. The first act, or *substantial form*, of the living thing, is found, on the other hand, to always have some kind of spontaneity, of self-motion. Complexity of passivities and internal determination of activities is the common thread which runs through all the hierarchy of living things.

In plants the passivity takes the form of the reception of elements from the outside, through the soil, etc.; while the spontaneous activity takes the form initially of the new entitative and dimensive unity which is given to these elements, and ultimately of the creation of new and similar organisms through the process of reproduction, by which natural things are enabled to imitate the eternity of the divine nature.<sup>9</sup> In animals, in addition to these vegetative functions,

<sup>4</sup> 414 b, 23.

<sup>5</sup> *De Anima*, II, 1, 412 b, 5: ἐντελέχεια ἢ πρώτη σώματος φυσικοῦ οργανικοῦ.

It should be noted that this does not imply that the soul is some special type of substantial form which is not united to prime matter. Rather, the implication is that the soul is that particular type of form which, when united to Prime Matter, causes a "unity in diversity"; i. e., is characterized by a variety of organs, of specialized instrumental faculties, all working in harmony for some end superior to any particular organ or the purely quantitative unity formed by the interconnected organs.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 5, 411 b, 9 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 4, 415 b, 15-18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 4, 415 b, 22-24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 4, 415 a, 23-30.

there is the higher passivity of the five senses, which are able to receive the various corporeal forms without their matter, like the wax receives the impression of a signet ring;<sup>10</sup> of the common sense, which merges these quintuple forms into the unity of a single impression;<sup>11</sup> and of the imagination, which retains these latter impressions in a more or less permanent way, through some organic repertoire, from which latent images may be re-explicated, at any time in the future, to cause re-activation of the body.<sup>12</sup> All such passively received sense impressions are like the various forms of fire which are necessary to ignite combustible objects.<sup>13</sup> There is also, in animals, the higher spontaneity of locomotion, by which they are enabled to vary and re-shape the parts of their body among themselves to a certain extent, and to move them as a whole from place to place, under impetus of sense appetite, to acquire concrete goods, or escape from concrete evils.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, in man, in addition to all the aforementioned, there is a higher passivity, a higher spontaneity, for man not only receives concrete forms without matter; he can apprehend them as universals.<sup>15</sup> And man not only initiates the higher intensities of locomotion, but also the activities of thought and volition, which have an immanent unity which seems not only to rise above the physical unity of the parts, but also to completely supercede these latter, and be carried on in an essentially autonomous way.<sup>16</sup>

The composite man is, therefore, the epitome of living organisms, in that he is not limited in potency, but is potential even to the separable forms of material things;<sup>17</sup> and has activities which not only rise above the multiple teleologies of the individual physical parts, but are in some way separable from these latter.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. ARISTOTLE'S FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE ON INTELLECT AND INTELLIGENCE.

Perhaps one of the most practicable ways to arrive at an understanding of the "moot points" in Aristotle's doctrine on the intellect — is to make a preliminary perusal of the text, to discover that which is explicit, and stated in relatively unambiguous terms:

In sensation, the various sensible forms of signate matter are separated from their material constrictions<sup>19</sup> and are given that actual existence which their previous material conditions had prevented them from having.<sup>20</sup> In intelligence, which in capacity is directly proportional to the perceptivity of the senses (the

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 12, *init.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 2, 427 a, 10-14.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 3, 427 b, 15-20; 429 a, 4, 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 5, 417 a, 7-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 9, 432 b, 15-18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 5, 417 b, 23-25. The mind is not purely passive in regard to the "reception" of universals, but only "*quoad objectum*", i. e., in so far as it depends on concrete phantasms as conditions for the "making" of universals, and can accomplish this "making" only in a temporally successive process.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, I, 1, 403 a, 6 ff; II, 1, 413 a, 14 ff; III, 4, 429 b, 3 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, III, 4, 429 b, 21 ff.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 12.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 2, 426 a, 20 ff.

sign of which is the sensitivity of touch<sup>21</sup>), these forms are further separated from their signate and concrete shapes; that is to say, the essence, or intelligibility, of these forms is separated. This essence, in so far as it has been freed from all particularity, can be called the "form of universality", or a "universal". These forms of universality become fully actualized *qua* forms<sup>22</sup> only in the soul, and come to have an independent and autonomous existence within the soul — constituting the latter in its specific perfection.<sup>23</sup> The soul, then, in so far as it is actual, and actively cognizant, becomes the "form of forms",<sup>24</sup> i. e., gives the ultimate formality, or actuality, of intelligibility to *sensata*, and hence to sensibles.

The human soul, in that it is thus able to give essential, intelligible, purely intentional formality to all material objects, is analogous to prime matter, which is all things, *in potentia*. As Aristotle says,<sup>25</sup>

Mind is in a sense potentially whatever is thinkable, though actually it is nothing until it has thought.

The human soul, then, and specifically the mind, has some kind of potentiality. This would ordinarily imply, in the Aristotelian context, that it has some kind of contrariety.<sup>26</sup> But what kind of contrariety could exist in the soul? There could certainly not be contrariety in the sense that one intelligible form could be a real terminus characterized by a definite lack of another *form*, as "black" is characterized by the absence of white. Aristotle answers this question in II *De Anima*, Ch. 5,<sup>27</sup> where he says that in knowledge, the passage from potency to act differs from the usual mode of such transition, in that there is no real privation at the "terminus" of potency. Rather, in the case of knowledge, there obtains

the development of an existent quality from potentiality in the direction of fixity or nature.<sup>28</sup>

And so, "potency" seems to be used in a different, or an accommodated sense, when applied to the intellect; perhaps in the same way — and for the same reason — that, in the *Physics*,<sup>29</sup> the term "contrariety" is used in the wide sense in regard to all changes, but is reserved in the most proper way to non-substantial changes.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 9, 421 a, 20 ff: This sensitivity of touch would seem to be a merely negative sign of intelligence; i. e., the lack of it would imply lack of intelligence, but its presence would not imply acts or habits of exceptional intelligence.

<sup>22</sup> But not *qua* universals: this requires an additional act of the soul.

<sup>23</sup> *De Anima*, II, 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 8, 432 a, 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 4, 429 b, 30-31. All quotations from Aristotle here are from the McKeon edition of the *De Anima*, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. e. g. *De Anima*, III, 6, 430 b, 24-25.

<sup>27</sup> 417 b, 22 ff.

<sup>28</sup> 417 b, 16: ST. THOMAS, in II *De Anima*, L. XI, n. 369, says that the "transition" involved in knowledge is unique, in that new positive formalities are acquired without privations being involved in any way.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Physics*, I, 9, 192 a, 17 ff, where Aristotle says that a "contrary" is a principle in all natural changes; but qualifies this, e. g. in V, 3, 227 a, 7 ff, where he says that there are no contraries involved strictly speaking in substantial changes, but rather "opposites".

<sup>30</sup> "Potency" in Aristotle is generally synonymous with "corporeality" (cf. for example *Physics*, VIII, 5, 258 a, 21 ff, where the potency in a self-mover is made synonymous with

The proper place, then, of universals, is the human soul. And these universal forms, after having been actualized in, and by, the soul, do not just pass on, never to be repeated, as do the transient activities which obtain in the sphere of strict corporeal contrariety. They remain in the soul, and can be reactivated spontaneously and autonomously by the soul, even in lieu of any corresponding sensory stimuli.<sup>31</sup> That is to say, they remain in the soul *in habitu*, in a state midway between potency and act.

The question naturally arises — if the soul, *qua* form and act, cannot have any corporeality mixed into it,<sup>32</sup> and is completely distinct from the order and progression which it causes,<sup>33</sup> and is in itself (*per se*) sundered from all hint of motion and change<sup>34</sup> — how can we explain the potentiality which seems to be found in the human soul. With the animal soul, there does not seem to be any problem. The active potencies of the vegetative parts, and the purely passive potencies of the sensory parts, do not reside *in* the soul as a subject (even imagination involves “motion” in the strict sense of the word, and is essentially connected with sensation<sup>35</sup>); their *actuation* is due to the efficiency of the soul, but they have their “termini of contrariety” in the disposition of the body. In the human soul, however, the potentiality for thought seems in some way to reside in the soul, as is indicated by the fact that the soul can initiate thought in an independent way, so that it does not even seem to be moved *per accidens*, as regards the thought activities themselves. What kind of potency is involved here?

Perhaps it was an awareness of this problem that moved Aristotle, in the beginning of the *De Anima*,<sup>36</sup> to pose the question as to whether there might be a plurality of souls in man. If there is not such a plurality of souls, there certainly seems to be a plurality of parts in the human soul *qua* intellectualive, a duality of active and passive parts. This basic duality is thus delineated by Aristotle:<sup>37</sup>

Mind in the passive sense is such because it becomes all things, but mind has another aspect in that it makes all things; this is a kind of positive state like light.

“Mind in the passive sense”, i. e., the intellect in so far as it is all (intelligible) forms in potency, is essentially changeable, and as such, destructible. At the death of the individual man, mind *qua* capable of change will pass away:

When mind is set free from its present conditions.... we do not.... remember its former activity because.... mind as passible is destructible.<sup>38</sup>

corporeality [continuous substance]). The question as to whether “potency” in the case of the soul is also to be taken as implying some kind of connected corporeal transition — seems to be the crux of the problem as to how Aristotle’s distinction between the active and passive aspects of the intellectualive soul is to be interpreted.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *De Anima*, II, 5, 417 b, 23 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, I, 5, 409 b, 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 4, 407 b, 32.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 3, 405 b, 32.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 3, 428 b, 10 ff.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 402 b, 9-10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 5, 430 a, 14 (Loeb. Ed.).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 5, 430 a, 23-25.



The "destructibility" here seems to refer not only to the overt operations of art and prudence which are done under the direction of mind, but even to what we would call essentially intellective activities:

Thinking, loving, and hating are affections not of mind, but of that which has mind, so far as it has it.<sup>39</sup>

Taking a clue from this passage, we might even hazard to say that thought activities — the formation and comparison of ideas — in so far as their transitions are measurable, do not even reside in the mind. Rather, they properly reside in "that which *has* mind," i.e., the human soul in its corporeal, transient functions.

And so, in the human soul, there is a basic duality between the inferior, passive parts of the soul, which are subject to various kinds of transition; and the superior, immovable part, which causes the transitions of thought, but itself is impervious to any transitions; namely, mind, which Aristotle denotes as "that whereby the *soul* thinks and judges".<sup>40</sup>

The passive part of the human soul, then, is subject to another part, which is fully actual, absolutely unchangeable, which is a "sort of positive state like light".<sup>41</sup> And just as there must be actual light before illumination, so also there must be actual knowledge before knowing, *in rerum natura*:

Actual knowledge is prior in the universe as a whole, not only in nature, but in time.<sup>42</sup>

Aristotle seems to be referring to this state of "actual knowledge" in the *Physics*,<sup>43</sup> where he says that the state of knowledge is to all appearances like a state of rest, in which phantasms are automatically illuminated, universalized, as soon as there exists a proper equipoise of bodily functions, and a proper order among the phantasms themselves. Knowledge is a state of constant actuality, which goes into effect spontaneously, if impediments and obstructions are removed.<sup>44</sup>

It is mind in this sense that Aristotle seems to be speaking of when he says that there appears to be some

independent substance implanted within the soul and .... incapable of being destroyed;

— and concludes that

In old age the activity of mind or intellectual apprehension declines only through the decay of some other inward part; mind itself is impassible.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 4, 408 b, 18 ff.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 4, 429 a, 24: Whether the potential part of the soul receives some kind of perpetual and stable perfection as a result of the seemingly passive change to which it is subject, will be considered later.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 5, 430 a, 16.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 7, 431 a, 1-4 (Loeb. Ed.).

<sup>43</sup> *Physics*, VII, 3, 247 b, 1 ff.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, 4, 255 b, 1-5, 22-23.

<sup>45</sup> *De Anima*, I, 4, 408 b, 18 ff: In applying "Mind" in these passages to the agent intellect and to the *habitus* of actual knowledge which is concomitant to it, I do not mean

Whether this active intelligence, comprising intellective light and actuated knowledge, is truly an "independent substance" or is merely the highest part of the soul (the specific perfection of the soul on which hinge all the various other aspects of its existence) — does not seem to be explicitly considered by Aristotle. Is this active intelligence a "higher soul" distinct from the lower part of the soul, in the same way that an animal soul is distinct from its body; or is it some way separable like figure and quantity are separable from matter by the geometrician; or is it unequivocally "separate", so that we have a repetition of the Platonic "imprisoned soul", which merely uses its organic shell as a horseman rides his steed?

Aristotle seems to indicate that the active intelligence is in some way our true self, and is in some way separable from matter, when he says that in the future life "we do not.... remember mind's former activity...."<sup>46</sup> Most likely the reason Aristotle does not go so far as to say that the active intelligence is *actu* separate from matter, is because we do not have any connatural, objective knowledge of separate substances. For, in Aristotle's view, we cannot posit any higher type of independence for the mind, than we can for the objects of the mind:

As objects are separable from their matter, so also are the corresponding faculties of the mind.<sup>47</sup>

— If we could have direct apprehension of separate substances, this would seem to be a sure indication, according to this last-mentioned principle, that there is some kind of a multiplicity of souls or substances contributing to what we call "man". However, since we can have no such direct apprehension, — especially in the hierarchically constructed Aristotelian universe — the discussion would seem, at face value, to be closed at this point.

However, Averroes, as we shall see, did not consider it to be thus "closed"....

### 3. AVERROES' HYPOTHESIS: A COMPLETELY SEPARATE INTELLECT.

Averroes, unlike his philosophical predecessor, Avicenna, who posited an individual speculative intellect which, though dependent for illumination on God (pure act), was independent and separable in its own right<sup>48</sup> — interpreted the intellect *qua* separable as referring to a separate substance outside of man, outside of the human soul. The separable, and indeed separate, intellect is, according to Averroes, the separate intelligence posited by Aristotle<sup>49</sup> as the mover of the sphere of the moon. This separate intelligence is the one "agent intellect" which illumines all mankind. As illuminating the imagination ("pas-

to distinguish this from the possible intellect, but rather from the passive intellect. Whether or not there is a possible intellect also separable from matter is one of the questions we will consider in this paper.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 5, 430 a, 24.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 4, 429 b, 22-23.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. GILSON, *Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 197-205.

<sup>49</sup> *Metaph.*, XII, 8.

sive intellect") of men, and thus undergoing transitions throughout the eternal generations of men — it becomes the "material intellect" (possible intellect).<sup>50</sup>

The material intellect is, according to Averroes, the form (*prima perfectio*) of man, resulting from the very reception of the intelligible species in the passive intellect.<sup>51</sup> *Quoad nos*, the material intellect is identifiable as the primary subject of the intelligible species, i. e., the temporary phenomenal unity and entitative formality which is caused in the rational animal by the very reception of these *intentiones intellectae*: and which effectually differentiates man from the other animals.<sup>52</sup>

This "entity", as the bridge between the agent intellect and matter, is the cause of the abstraction of forms from matter. It is not passive and corruptible in the sense that purely material forms (subject to constriction, contrariety, transmutability, etc.) are. Rather, this *primary subject*, as well as the *secondary subject*, i. e., the particular phantasms which are illumined — which together constitute the integral and existent material rationality — are corruptible *secundum quid*. That is to say, they are corruptible in so far as this or that individual man dies. But they are *in toto* incorruptible, in the sense that they will be continued on by successive coadaptations of the agent intellect with individual imaginations, throughout the perpetual generations of men. Also, in the wide sense, they are incorruptible *in se*, precisely in so far as that which constitutes their ultimate formality and actuality — i. e., the intelligible intentions, which cause the universalization of the subjective rational dispositions — are merely extensions of the power of the efficient (agent) intellect, and thus share in the essential incorruptibility of the latter.<sup>53</sup>

In commenting on the passage in *III De Anima*, 5, where Aristotle differentiates the active from the passive aspects of intellect, Averroes, in consonance with the general tenor of his doctrine, as we have just outlined it, writes as follows:

It was necessary to attribute these two actions, i. e. the reception of thought and the making of thought, to the soul which is in us, even though the real agent and recipient are eternal substances. And the reason for this is that these two actions — i. e., the abstraction of intelligibles and the understanding of them — are reducible in the last analysis to our own spontaneity. For "to abstract" means nothing more than to reduce the imaginative intentions in the mind to act, after they have been in potency. And "to understand" means nothing more than to receive such intentions.

And since we *experience* the selfsame thing, i. e., the imaginative intentions, to be transferred in being from one order to the other, we naturally say that there must be an agent and recipient as causes of this. On this token, then, the recipient is material, while the agent is efficient.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> GILSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 224, 225.

<sup>51</sup> AVERROES, *In III De Anima*, V, 376-394.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 1-47.

<sup>53</sup> AVERROES, *In III De Anima*, V, 549-604.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII, lines 72-82: "Fuit necesse attribuere has duas actiones anime in nobis, scilicet recipere intellectum et facere eum, quamvis agens et recipiens sint substantie eterne, propter hoc quia hae due actiones reducte sunt ad nostram voluntatem, scilicet abstrahere intellecta et intelligere ea. Abstrahere enim nichil est aliud quam facere intentiones ymaginatas intellectas in actu postquam erant in potentia; intelligere autem nichil aliud est quam recipere has intentiones. Cum enim invenimus idem transferri in suo esse de ordine in ordi-

It may be surmised from this that, in Averroes' estimation, the distinction by Aristotle of the intellect into its "own" active and passive aspects, is just a phenomenal description, an accommodation to our human way of perceiving things. Nor does Averroes find any difficulty from the subsequent statement of Aristotle that, in the separated state, "we do not.... remember mind's former activity".<sup>55</sup> For, in Averroes' formulation, "we", i. e., the human *supposita*, are nothing but transient manifestations of the power of the separate intelligence. And thus, in commenting on this passage, Averroes does not retain the "we", but seems to feel justified in confining the discussion to "our thoughts":

The interpretation of this passage contains the answer to the question which caused the ancient commentators to believe that the intellect *in habitu* is eternal, and caused Alexander to suppose that the material intellect was itself generable and corruptible: namely, the question, «how is it that *our thoughts* are *not* eternal, while the intellect, and its recipient, is eternal?» And Aristotle seems to answer us, saying that the material intellect understands nothing without the passive intellect, in spite of the fact that it is itself the agent and recipient; just as there can be no perception of color without some colored thing — in spite of the fact that there is light and the power of sight.<sup>56</sup>

Averroes seems to be saying, in effect, that "we do not remember" in this future state, simply because we are not there; and we are not there, simply because our constituent thoughts are not there. For, even on the basis of experience alone, who would say that the thoughts which succeed one another in our mind in a constant train are — any of them — eternal? Our thoughts are the result, proximately, of our ephemeral passive intellect, which merely contributes its moments to the material intellect "obtaining" *ipso facto* from the continuation of separate agent intellect and human imaginations.

With great argumentative skill, Averroes thus justifies his theory of a completely separate intelligence. It remains to be seen whether this theory is in concord with the whole context of Aristotle's doctrine on the soul.

#### 4. ST. THOMAS' REFUTATION OF AVERROES.

Averroes, as we have seen, posited one intellect for all men: an intellect which in itself was completely actual and active — an agent intelligence; but through its diffusive power, through its power of activating the "first and

---

nem, scilicet intentiones ymaginatas, diximus quod necesse est ut hoc sit a causa agenti et recipienti. Recipiens igitur est materialis, et agens est efficiens".

<sup>55</sup> ARISTOTLE, *De Anima*, III, 5, 24.

<sup>56</sup> AVERROES, *In III De Anima*, XX, Lines 230-240: Erit sermo in quo dixit: "Et non rememoratur, etc.", dissolutio questionis que fecit antiquos expositores credere intellectum qui est in habitu esse eternum, et fecit Alexandrum opinare intellectum materialem esse generabilem et corruptibilem, in qua dicebatur: Quomodo intellecta a nobis sunt non eterna, cum hoc quod intellectus est eternus et recipiens est eternum? Et quasi dicit respondendo quod causa in hoc est quia intellectus materialis nichil intelligit sine intellectu passibili, licet agens sit et recipiens sit, sicut comprehendere colorem non est, licet lux sit et visus sit, nisi coloratum sit.

second subjects" with which the eternal generations of men supplied it — "became" the eternally-progressing *material* intellect.

If Averroes had only posited a separate *agent* intellect, he would no doubt have been in store for more lenient treatment at the hands of the Angelic Doctor. For, as St. Thomas himself avers,

No intolerable conclusions would seem to follow, if multitudes were perfected by one agent, after the manner that all the visual faculties of animals are brought to the perfection of sight by a single sun.<sup>57</sup>

After all, in the strict sense, there is one separate agent intellect for all men — and this is God Himself, Who illumines all intellectual creatures.<sup>58</sup> And to say there is one agent intellect for all men would neither uproot the foundations of Christian belief, nor do much violence to the context of Aristotle: It would leave Christian faith and morals relatively undisturbed, because the *possible* intellect would still be saddled with responsibility in these areas — albeit a responsibility conceived in a more passive manner. And it would also seem to do nothing more to Aristotle than imbue him with a Platonistic tinge — which would certainly represent no unprecedented anomaly in the annals of the interpreters of Aristotle.<sup>59</sup>

However, Averroes posited not only a separate agent intellect, but also a separate "material" intellect, as we have seen. Such a separate material intellect (which St. Thomas makes synonymous with the "possible" intellect) would give rise to innumerable difficulties: As a separate substance, removed from all the transience of matter, it would itself be always understanding *actu*. How, then, could we explain the separate intellections of diverse men? Individual men could not be moved by one possible intellect as a *motor*, because this would destroy their personal responsibility and free will, and consequently also the grounds for moral philosophy. Nor could *intelligere actu* be a mere transient action, passing through men, for by definition it is the immanent action properly attributable only to the separate possible intellect; and indeed, as a received action, it would be a passion, an *intelligi* rather than an *intelligere*: it would only cause men to *be understood* in a passing manner — but not to have their own individual intellections. Nor, finally, would it do to

<sup>57</sup> *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, Ch. VI, p. 32 (Mandonnet): "Nihil... videtur inconueniens sequi, si ab uno agente multa perficiantur, quemadmodum ab uno sole perficiuntur omnes potentiae visivae animalium ad videndum".

<sup>58</sup> *Summa Th.*, I, q. 79, art. 4, corpus et ad 1<sup>um</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> I. e., in that Plato posited no abstraction, but actuation by the Forms. Even St. Albert seems to have interpreted Aristotle after such a "Platonic" fashion: In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Albert characterizes God and the separate substances as diffusive "light" which actively creates all things by its very diffusion. Although positing an individual agent intellect for each man, Albert nevertheless declared that the light of this agent intellect was insufficient to induce knowledge, without some supervening superabundant light (cf. GILSON, *op. cit.*, p. 671); and, in differentiating human knowledge from the knowledge had by separate substances, he characterizes the former as essentially *passive*: "Nos, in theoria existentes, non facimus theorematum, sed potius *faciunt nos* (cf. *In XI Metaph.*, Tract. II, Ch. XIII)". The "separated intellects", in such a system, seem to be like the separated Forms of Plato, which alone are actual, and which themselves effectuate all actual knowledge in inferior creatures.

consider the separate possible intellect as a principal mover, and all men as subsidiary *instruments*: for the distribution of, and differentiation of, and personal responsibility for, all human actions, would still have to be referred to the principal agent, i. e., the separate possible intellect.<sup>60</sup>

In a word, the hypothesis of a separate possible intellect would wrest from man every remnant of free will, and responsibility, and individual autonomy — and must be eschewed on these grounds.

After all is said and done, though, we might pose the question: Is Averroes' "material intellect" really the same as the "possible intellect" of Thomistic terminology? Would such a material intellect really have any separate immanent activity different from the immovable *intelligere actu* of the separate agent intellect? In other words, does Averroes allow any kind of transition from potency to act other than purely material transitions, or motions?

He does allow some transitions from potency to act which are not from contrary to contrary, but are, as Aristotle puts it, "in the direction of fixity or nature".<sup>61</sup> Such a transition would be, for example, the transition from boyhood to manhood.<sup>62</sup> However, it is significant that when he comes to comment on Aristotle's statement<sup>63</sup> that universals are in a sense in the soul, and that a man can exercise them at will — he gives an entirely different interpretation to these words than does St. Thomas: For St. Thomas, the "first act" which is here developed in the direction of fixity or nature, is the *natura communis*, an intelligible essence which is still potential to receiving the intention of universality.<sup>64</sup> For Averroes, on the other hand, the first act which is educed to the ultimate act of universal predication, is merely the *intentio imaginabilis*, the phantasm of the imagination, the "secondo subject" of the separated intellect, — an intrinsically material and transitory subject.<sup>65</sup>

Such a transition as Averroes presents, although it is higher than the mere motion from contrary to contrary, and no doubt also of a higher type than the semi-spontaneous activities of brute animals — is nevertheless not an autonomous, separate immanent activity. It rises above the forces of the material components of that in which it is found — as forms and habits often do.<sup>66</sup> But it does not rise so far above these latter as to be separate and independent. For St. Thomas, on the other hand, such a transition is not just a relatively high type of spontaneity, but an activity which begins and ends in the mind, and does not depend on phantasms except *per accidens*, i. e., *quoad objectum*.

As we mentioned above,<sup>67</sup> the question as to whether there can be any potentiality which is not essentially dependent on matter, seems to be the key to the differing interpretations of Aristotle's distinction between the active and passive aspects of the intelligence.<sup>68</sup> For St. Thomas, there is some pas-

<sup>60</sup> For the above arguments, cf. *De Unitate Intellectus*, Ch.'s V, VI (Mandonnet Ed., pp. 53-59).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *De Anima*, II, 5, 417 b, 16.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. AVERROES, *In II De Anima*, n. 61.

<sup>63</sup> *De Anima*, II, 5, 417 b, 22-25.

<sup>64</sup> ST. THOMAS, *In II De Anima*, Lect. XII, n. 375-380.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. AVERROES, *In II De Anima*, Sect. 60, 17-38.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS, *De Unitate Intellectus*, p. 316, Ch. II (Mandonnet, p. 41).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. n. 30.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *De Anima*, III, 5, 430 a, 14 (Loeb. Ed.).

sivity or potentiality<sup>69</sup> in the soul which is completely immune from the cor-ruptive contrarities of matter, and which can be developed in only one direction — towards perfection, i. e., an immaterial perfection. For Averroes, however, all the passivity of the material intellect seems to be an essentially “corruptive” passivity; it is identified with the imaginative and cogitative powers of the sensitive soul of man,<sup>70</sup> and passes along in perpetual fluxation throughout the eternal generations of men, perishing in an individual man at his death, being renewed and “continued on” with the birth of thought in other individual men.

The fact that St. Thomas interprets the nature of the intellect in a different way than does Averroes, seems to hinge on two considerations: a) That the human soul is the *form* of the body; and b) that the human mind has operations which are *per se* independent of the body. In the sections that follow, we will consider the impact that these considerations have had on Thomas’ doctrine on the intellect; and then show how he solves the problem of “the one and the many” — as applied to the intellect.

a) *The human soul as form of the body.*

The intellective soul, although coming to man, according to Aristotle, “from without” (*de foris*),<sup>71</sup> is still educed from the potency of the matter, in so far as the matter preexists the form of the intellective soul; and the intellective soul is still the principle *per prius* of all the living operations of *this* composite man, with *this* particular body.<sup>72</sup> Like every other soul, it is the “first act of a natural organic body”, and carries out this common “function” of soul just as a circle, triangle, and pentagon all conform to the general definition of “figure”.<sup>73</sup> Although there is a problem as to whether the vegetative and sensitive parts of the soul have a different *origin* than the intellective part,<sup>74</sup> still, once the intellective soul has been coadapted to the human composite, it proceeds to “contain”, in that individual man, all the inferior types of soul which are in man; just as a tetragon, being a more advanced type of figure, contains virtually within it also the triangle.<sup>75</sup> The mind, as the principal part or potency of the intellective soul, is “that whereby the *soul* thinks and judges”;<sup>76</sup> it is not an extrinsic, active principle which does the thinking and judging for the soul, but rather an intrinsic power, consequent upon the very nature of the human soul, to which all its operations

<sup>69</sup> I am following the Loeb translation quoted above. The “passive aspects” of the soul should not be confused with the “passive intellect” — which, as we shall see, has a more restricted meaning than the former term. (Some of the passivity of the soul is immaterial potentiality).

<sup>70</sup> AVERROES, *In III De Anima*, 5, 20; 182-188.

<sup>71</sup> ST. THOMAS, *De Unitate Intellectus*, p. 319, Ch. III (p. 46, Mandonnet).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. II, p. 313 (p. 38, Mandonnet).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, (37, Mandonnet).

<sup>74</sup> ST. THOMAS, *De Unitate Intellectus*, Ch. III, pp. 319, 320.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

<sup>76</sup> ARISTOTLE, *De Anima*, III, 429 a, 23 (quoted by THOMAS, in *III De Anima*, 4, Lect. VII, n. 690).

are ultimately to be credited.<sup>77</sup> This mind, before it thinks, is not actually any of the things that it comes to know;<sup>78</sup> but it is "in potency" to *becoming* all things. It is an artifact of infinite potentiality, so to speak, in that it can become all things by an intentional union. However, it is not just the artifact, but also its own *artificer*. It can become all things precisely because it can *make* itself into all things, in this intentional way.<sup>79</sup>

The intellectual soul, then, *qua* intellectual, has a dual aspect: In so far as it is passive to the reception of purely intentional perfections *ad infinitum*, i. e. in so far as it is potential to all things, it is mind-in-potency, or the possible intellect.<sup>80</sup> In so far as it can "make" all things out of its own resources, it must already have the ultimate formality or light through which phantasms are rendered actually intelligible; i. e., it must be actual in some way; and this aspect of the soul is the mind-in-act, or the *agent* intellect.<sup>81</sup>

The human soul, then, as the form of the human body, is, in Thomas' formulation, a self-contained unity, which includes within its scope all the vegetative and sensitive functions of man in a pre-eminent way; and also, in the most proper way, as the immediate consequence of its own specific formality, the functions of the agent and possible intellect. The agent intellect is an active potency of the soul, along with the vegetative powers.<sup>82</sup> The possible intellect is a quasi-passive potency of the soul.<sup>83</sup> Both agent and possible intellects are separable, impassible, and unmixed. They differ from each other in that the agent intellect is *in act*, according to its substance; while the possible intellect is in act only according to the impressed species possessed, but in potency according to its "substance" — i. e., it is still in potency in so far as it is the *subject* of these intelligible species, and also in so far as it is capable of receiving still further "impressions" of intelligible species.<sup>84</sup>

#### b) *The autonomy of the human mind.*

Aristotle, unlike Plato, did not base the actuality of thought upon any separate and completely actual corresponding Ideas existing in the supernal regions. In Aristotle's universe, as also in Plato's, actuality must be prior in

<sup>77</sup> ST. THOMAS, *In III De Anima*, 4, Lect. VII, n. 689 ff.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* (cf. ARISTOTLE, *De Anima*, III, 5, 430 a, 15).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 5, Lect. X, n. 735.

<sup>80</sup> *In III De Anima*, 5, Lect. X, n. 728.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> ST. THOMAS, *De virtute in communi*, I, Art. I, corpus.

<sup>83</sup> I say "quasi passive", because strictly speaking only the sense powers are truly passive potencies, i. e., dependent *per se* on external agents (sensible objects for actuation).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS, *In III De Anima*, 5, Lect. X, n. 732. The other aspect or facet of intellect, which is completely in potency, completely passive and transitory, — what St. Thomas calls the "passive intellect", — is described in the following manner:

Haec pars animae dicitur intellectus, sicut et dicitur rationalis, in quantum aequaliter participat rationem, obediendo rationi, et sequendo motum ejus. (*Loc. cit.*, n. 745).

As may be seen, this "passive intellect" is not "intellect" in a univocal sense: rather, it is the complex of inferior operations in the soul, e. g., the imagination and the memory, which in so far as they participate in a more or less proximate way in the operations of intelligence, appear in a phenomenal and ephemeral fashion to be themselves "intelligent operations".



the whole scheme of things.<sup>85</sup> But he differed from Plato in refusing to make the gratuitous assumption of separate Ideas, or intelligible Forms, as a prior actuality which by participation or diffusion could be reactivated in man's mind, through "remembrance". Rather, he chose to take a more empirical, scientific approach, and let the facts speak for themselves. And what are the facts: They are simply as follows: The human being approaches the raw material of sensible objects; unifies his sensations into the concrete actuality of single impressions, or phantasms; and then, from these latter, abstracts what was previously actually perceptible but only potentially intelligible, and makes this *actually* intelligible. The mind grapples with the intelligible species which are potential in things, and makes them actual by abstracting them, by separating them both from matter, and from material conditions. The mind itself, then, must in some way give actuality to thought. — It was such considerations as these, says St. Thomas,<sup>86</sup> that prompted Aristotle to posit, instead of separate Platonic Forms, a separate and actual "agent" intellect:

Since Aristotle taught that the intelligible essences of sensible things are in matter, but are not intelligible *actu*, it was necessary that he should point out the intellectual principle which could abstract these essences, and thus render them intelligible *actu*.<sup>87</sup>

And so, instead of separate and actual Platonic Forms mysteriously causing thought in man, we have a separate and actual agent intellect, and a separate and actualized possible intellect. But how separate? And how actual, or actualized?

Both possible and agent intellect must be separate, St. Thomas tells us,<sup>88</sup> since as Aristotle says, mind is potential to the intentional possession of *all* real things,<sup>89</sup> and, unlike the faculty of sensations, is not dependent upon the body.<sup>90</sup> The intellect is also separable in the most ultimate way, in that it is perpetual,<sup>91</sup> and can perdure after the dissolution of the corporeal organs on which it had depended *per modum objecti*.<sup>92</sup> While it is joined to a living human being, however, it is dependent *per accidens* on phantasms, as the materials with which it must work, if it is to be perfected in the natural manner; it is like an ethereal body which is a naturally light, but which is prevented from rising up higher, because of the temporal and material conditions in which it is situated.<sup>93</sup>

The intellect is not only naturally separate, but actual of its very nature. The agent intellect, as actuating mind, is, says St. Thomas, a positive state, a

<sup>85</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Metaph.*, XII, 6, 1072 a, 4 ff; also, *De Anima*, III, 7, 431 a, 1 ff.

<sup>86</sup> *In III De Anima*, 5, Lect. X, n. 731.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*: Quia Aristoteles ponit, quod quidditates rerum sensibilium sunt in materia, et non intelligibiles actu, oportuit quod poneret aliquem intellectum qui abstraheret a materia, et sic faceret eas intelligibiles actu.

<sup>88</sup> *In III De Anima*, 5, Lect. X, n. 742; and 4, Lect. VII, n. 687-699.

<sup>89</sup> ARISTOTLE, *De Anima*, III, 4, 429 a, 23.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 4, 429 b, 4.

<sup>91</sup> ST. THOMAS, *De Unitate Intellectus*, II, p. 313 (35, Mand).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 317, 318, Ch. III (42, 43, Mand.).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 318, 319 (45, Mand).

habit of the soul; <sup>94</sup> it is, indeed, the very actuality of that knowledge which must be presupposed for any progression in knowledge:

That which is in potency, can only be reduced to act by that which already is in act. And so a person who has knowledge in potency does not come into the possession of actual knowledge, by experiment or through teaching — except by dint of that actual knowledge which must already be present in the mind: and the reason for this is that any teaching or learning which takes place in or through the mind, presupposes some previous cognition, as (Aristotle) says, in Bk. 1 of the *Posterior Analytics*. <sup>95</sup>

The "agency" of the intellect creates the store of "actual knowledge" which the human soul possesses, and causes this store to be expanded, as it were, indefinitely, through the medium of whatever phantasms are present to the mind and properly disposed to allow intellection. This "actual knowledge" is not the impressed species, which is not yet activated. It is rather the first principles, the primary habitual knowledge possessed by the human soul as a result of its very creation by God. <sup>96</sup> And the possible intellect is the eternal receptacle, so to speak, of the actual knowledge. From the very moment that the human soul informs the individual human body, it begins to tend towards expressing, in mature thought, the actuality which it already possesses. It attains to this end naturally and inexorably, as soon as the dispositions of the body permit. <sup>97</sup> It must even be presupposed that, as the first act, to which all the operations of the body are teleologically ordered, <sup>98</sup> it tends to cause obstacles to be removed and maturity to be attained, so that the full activity of thought may take place without hindrance.

The individual human intellect is then, according to St. Thomas, separate from, intrinsically immune from, matter; and is a subsistent spiritual substance in its own right. For its full perfection and entitative completion, it needs material adjuncts; but it can "live without these", so to speak. This separate subsistence of the soul is not, however, a subsistence in word alone. The soul is not like a man on a mountain top who says he is completely self-sufficient, but must still look outside himself for his food supply. No, the soul has all the equipment of self-subsistence intrinsically, of its very nature.

<sup>94</sup> *In III De Anima*, Lect. X, 728, 729.

<sup>95</sup> *In III De Anima*, Lect. X, n. 740: Quod in potentia est, non reducitur in actum nisi per aliquod quod est actu. Et sic etiam de potentia sciente, non fit aliquis sciens actu, inveniendō, neque discendo, nisi per aliquam scientiam praeexistentem in actu; quia omnis doctrina et disciplina intellectiva fit ex praeexistenti cognitione, ut dicitur in primo *Posteriorum*.

<sup>96</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 79, art. 4, c.; also *De Unitate Int.*, Ch. VII, p. 333. This is not to identify the agent intellect with the self-evident first principles; but only to specify it as the habit, i. e., the actuality or "light" of the first principles.

<sup>97</sup> *In VII Phys.*, Lect. VI; "intellectus.... possibilis secundum se consideratus, semper est in ultima dispositione ad recipiendam speciem intelligibilem. Si ergo non sit impedimentum, statim ad praesentiam objectorum, per experimentum acceptorum, advenit ei species intelligibilis, sicut speculo forma specularis ad praesentiam corporis.... Si vero sit impedimentum, sicut juvenibus accidit, oportet hujusmodi impedimenta auferri ad hoc quod species intelligibilis in intellectu recipiatur...."

<sup>98</sup> *De Anima*, II, 4, 415 b, 15-18.

Once created, it actualizes itself, vivifies<sup>99</sup> itself. Whether it be detained at the core of the universe, or transported to the heights of the "celestial spheres", it has one thing that cannot be taken away from it; namely, thought-energy,  $\eta\ \rho\acute{o}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ .

Having considered St. Thomas' premises of the complete autonomy and self-sufficiency of the human intellect, as an essential and intrinsic power of the individual intellective soul — we may now proceed to examine his conclusions as to just how the intellect is one, and just how it is individual.

c) *St. Thomas' solution: "Pluralitas intellectuum, unitas intellecti"*.

Averroes, the "perverter of the text" of Aristotle, attained something of a noble purpose in ascribing all the diverse thoughts and ideas of men to a separate, independent intellect. By this means he supplied a doctrinal foundation for the unity which is found in the universal ideas of men, for the communication which is possible among them. But he does not solve the problem in doing this, says St. Thomas.<sup>100</sup> Rather, he creates new and insuperable problems:

1) According to the doctrine of Averroes, change, and the transient perfectibility of thought, accrue only to the imaginations of men. The separate possible intellect would have to have, in habit, and in itself, the totality of all diverse thoughts, before it could communicate these latter by "continuation" with men's imaginations. Therefore no individual man could "discover" for himself anything which the (i. e., *bis*) possible intellect did not already know. "Discovery" would be just a word.

2) Neither could a man "learn" anything from a teacher. For he and his teacher would share the same possible intellect. And if the one possessed the knowledge to be communicated, the other must necessarily also possess the same knowledge *before* it is communicated.

3) The single possible intellect could not be "dependent" on the phantasms of individual men, for some kind of purely extrinsic perfectibility or progression. For, according to Aristotle's theory, men have always existed; i. e., there never was a first man. Therefore, there could never have been a first thought. And if there were no first thought, there could be none now.

Also, to even talk about "continuation" of the possible intellect with the phantasms of men is absurd. For the intelligible species of this possible intellect would be, by definition, abstracted from phantasms, i. e., completely separate from the latter. And it makes no sense to speak of the continuation of two things, one of which has it as an essential characteristic to be *separate* from the other.

4) Nor could the possible intellect merely superimpress its intelligible species on the phantasms, and illustrate them in this way. For the intel-

<sup>99</sup> I. e., in the intellective sense; cf. *Metaph.*, XII, 7, 1072 b, 26:

"The actuality of thought is life".

<sup>100</sup> For the following, cf. *De Unitate Intellectus*, p. 328 ff; (60-62, Mand) and *In III De Anima*, Lect. VII, n. 689 ff.

ligible content of such phantasms would still only be potentially intelligible. It would have to be actually abstracted, to be made actually intelligible. Such a "superimpression" would amount to nothing more than juxtaposition of phantasm and concept. Human *thought* would not ensue.

5) If in any way our phantasms were activated and illustrated by some *extrinsic* intellect, this would indeed cause us, and our phantasms, to be *understood*; but in no wise would it make us understanding.

6) If, finally, in lieu of any continuation with, or super-impression on, the phantasms of men, the separate possible intellect were completely disparate — somehow causing thought at a distance — this would involve us in even worse difficulties than before: For the first prerequisites, indispensable for any individual acts of intellection, are a) a medium, through which thought can take place; and b) a proportion between the mind and the instruments of the mind.

— Granted, then, that the intellect is not a separate substance sundered in its entity from the souls of men, and that thought must be an activity somehow intrinsic to each individual intellectual soul — how do we explain those passages in Aristotle where he indicates that thought-activities should not be attributed to the soul itself, but rather to the composite? For instance, in *I De Anima*, 4, 408 b, 13, he says that "it is doubtless better to avoid saying that the soul pities or learns or thinks, and rather to say that it is the man who does this with his soul". And in the same place, 408 b, 25, he adds that "thinking, loving, and hating are affections not of mind, but of that which has mind, so far as it has it".

In commenting on both of these passages,<sup>101</sup> St. Thomas says that Aristotle is not restricting the essential operations of mind to that which takes place in the corporeal organs; but rather "*supponendo loquitur*", i. e., is merely repeating the opinion of the ancient philosophers, who could conceive of the operations of the mind only in terms of the various observable phenomena to be found in the "passive intellect". Averroes, on the other hand, does not add any such qualifications, but rather presents this as Aristotle's own opinion.<sup>102</sup>

It is significant, I think, that Averroes does not find anything strange in such passages, anything which would appear to be at variance with the whole corpus of Aristotelian doctrine. For Averroes was himself of the same materialistic bent as the ancient naturalists whose doctrine Aristotle sifts in the first book of the *De Anima*. For Averroes himself, the natural world is syno-

<sup>101</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS, *In I De Anima*, Lect. X, n. 151-152, and n. 165. — N.B. In the last-mentioned paragraph, St. Thomas paraphrases Aristotle as saying "hujusmodi operationes, quae sunt intelligere, amare, et odire, sunt passiones 'illius', scilicet animae (supponendo loquitur), 'sed hujus habentis'". This passage makes no sense, in the context, as it stands. It would seem that a "non" should be inserted between "odire" and "sunt". This is verified by the fact that a "non" does appear in the *versio antiqua* of Aristotle, which is being paraphrased here.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. AVERROES, *In I De Anima*, n. 64, lines 10-27, and n. 66, lines 37-47. The passages in question would be, at face value, in consonance with our ordinary human parlance, but, in the whole context of Aristotle's doctrine, would seem to demand some qualification or explanation — especially in view of the doctrine which Aristotle propounds in *III De Anima*, 5.

nymous with the material world. And so it is natural that, in other passages, where Aristotle speaks of a separate intellect or eternal life, Averroes should forthwith relegate such thought and such life to a sphere above the natural world, to the sphere of the separated intelligences. In this way, his own natural world is left intact. Human thought is just another material transition. If there is any eternal *immanent* activity, this must be attributed only to God and the separate intelligences, moving the world from without, unmoved themselves, never coming into contact with the world because contact implies motion.

In trying to corroborate these opinions, Averroes reveals the incongruity of his position. The gratuitous hypothesis of a separated possible intellect, far from explaining the phenomenon of human cognition, makes it almost completely unintelligible. It is a step backward. It is a reversion to the view of Anaxagoras, who posited a separate and impassible intellect, but still left the problem of knowledge unsolved.<sup>103</sup>

Aristotle himself went beyond the materialists whom he synthesizes in the *De Anima*. He fully recognized that there is the spark of the divine *in* material form themselves.<sup>104</sup> The divine spark in man is the intellect — both possible and agent — which alone in the physical world is capable of a separate and perpetual existence, simply because it alone truly subsists immovably in itself, “*vere est*”.<sup>105</sup>

The intellect, then, is neither a logical genus, nor a separate Platonic Form, nor a separate substance. It is a real “instrument of instruments” existing in individual men. There are as many intellects as there are men.

Nor does any contradiction to this arise from the fact that the intellectual soul is immaterial, i. e., essentially independent from matter in its operation and esse. True, matter is the ordinary cause of the individuation and multiplication of things in the physical world. However, there is no more of a contradiction involved in the multiplication of separate and immaterial substances on the basis of material generation, says St. Thomas, than there is in the fact that a body which is naturally heavy is, because of contingent circumstances, temporarily on top of that which is naturally light.<sup>106</sup>

But if the intellect is thus individuated, if there are as many intellectual principles as there are men, how do we explain the apparent unity of our understanding — the fact that we seem to share the same universal ideas, and to communicate our own ideas in some way to others? Must not there be some kind of transcendent unity of the intellect, to explain the agreement, and communication, which obtains among thinking men?

The unity we must look for is, says St. Thomas, not a unity of some all-

<sup>103</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS, *In I De Anima*, Lect. V, n. 57, 66.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *De Anima*, II, 4, 415 a, 26 ff; also, *Physics*, I, 192 a, 17 ff.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS, *In III De Anima*, Lect. X, n. 742, 743.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS, *De Unitate Intellectus*, p. 331 (63-64. Mandonnet), Ch. VII. This should not be taken as implying that the multiplication of intellects is just a temporary and, as it were, unnatural state, like the elevated position of a naturally heavy body; but rather, as a mere illustration to show that there is no more *contradiction* involved in the one case, than there is in the other.

embracing intellect, but a unity of the intellected, of the understood thing. To account for the unity of understanding among men,

we must simply concede that the understanding of some particular thing, for example an individual rock, can only be one, not only for all men, but also in regard to all intellects.<sup>107</sup>

And so the unity of the understanding of men, even in regard to "separable" objects (e. g. mathematical notions), does not prove that there is one separate intellect with its own separate *species intelligibilis*. Rather, it is explained by the fact that different intellects, by means of different intelligible species, can all focus on the same potentially intelligible object:

The object which is understood by me and by you is one and the same thing; but it is understood in one way by me, and in another way by you — that is, by a different intelligible species in each case; and my act of understanding is different from your act of understanding; and my intellect is different from your intellect.<sup>108</sup>

The question of "the one and the many", therefore, as applied to the understanding, seems to be resolved by a consideration of the nature of the *intelligible species*. The intelligible species is not the object of knowledge, but only the means of knowing; it is a certain spiritual representation or similitude, in the soul, of the objects of knowledge. And so, in the event that there are many intellects, all having their own diverse intellectual representations of the same identical object — the concepts formed in such an event are in a way the same, in a way different. They are the same, in that they are all referred outside themselves to one and the same focal point, so to speak. They are different, in that the species and the intellect, in each case, share in the different entitative characteristics of the individual intellectual soul in which they happen to inhere.

In the case given above, the process of cognition begins with one type of unity, and ends with another: The *natura communis*, before it is abstracted from objects, is one in its origin, and potentially one in its universal predicability, but is actually multiplied through the physical principles of matter, form and privation. After it is abstracted, and receives the intention of universality, it takes on a new type of unity, a unity which transcends the constrictions of the principles of nature; i. e., the very unity of the "separate" possible intellect which it informs. The unity of the universal, as such, exists only in the individual intellectual soul:

A single *natura communis* is only predicated of many, according as it is conceived beyond those principles by which "the one" is divided into "the many": and from

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. VII, p. 332 (60 f, Mandonnet): « Est... simpliciter concedendum quod intellectum unius rei, puta lapidis, est unum tantum, non solum in omnibus hominibus sed etiam in omnibus intellectibus ».

<sup>108</sup> *De Unitate Intellectus*, Ch. VII, p. 333 (65, Mandonnet): " Est... unum quod intelligitur a me et a te; sed alio intelligitur a me, et alio a te, id est, alia specie intelligibili; et aliud est intelligere meum, et aliud tuum; et alius est intelligere meus, et alius tuus ».

this it follows that universals, *qua* universals, do not have any existence except in the soul.<sup>109</sup>

The new unity which is "lent" to the *natura communis* does not, however, imply the unity of the activated species, nor of the subjective intellects receiving these latter. If it implies any supreme unity beyond the unity of the material object and the individual unity of the one receiving the species — it would imply the unity of the first "illustrator" or "teacher" — or, in Avicenna's terminology, the "last intellect" — i. e., God.<sup>110</sup> Just as the individual activation and common perceptions of the visual potencies of animals, is due to the universal illumination of the sun: so also, the multiplication of common intelligible species among men, must be referred to God, the First Source of all intellectual illumination. The very fact that there are many *lumina* implies that there is some single *lux* as the cause of these. Men, therefore, do not share one common intellect; but they do share one common Teacher.

But isn't this just a play on words? If all actual knowledge exists in God's intellect, and if He shares this knowledge with us, "passing it on" to us, "teaching" us in some interior way — is this not, in effect to share His intellect with us? Do we not, in our thought-activity, *participate* in the *intelligere* of God, and thus also in His *intellect*? This would not follow, according to the principles propounded by Aquinas. For "teaching", according to him, is not a process by which knowledge is transferred through media of varying tractability from one intellect to another. Rather, it is much like the process of healing, in which the physician merely « helps nature along » to effect the cure of the patient:

It is not required that the knowledge which is in the learner should be caused by the knowledge which is in his teacher, in the way that the heat in water is transferred, for instance, from the heat in a flame; rather, it is caused in much the same manner as the health in a material subject is caused by the health which is in the soul of the physician. For, just as there exists in the sick patient the physical principle of health, to which the physician merely administers reinforcements, for the practical attainment of health: so also, in the learner, there is a natural principle of knowledge — that is to say, the agent intellect, along with the first principles *per se nota*. All the teacher does is supply certain aids, in order to deduce the consequences from these self-evident principles....<sup>111</sup>

God, then, as the universal Teacher of mankind, does not, at least in the natural order, share His intellect or his *intelligere* with individual men, in order

<sup>109</sup> ST. THOMAS, *In II De Anima*, Lect. XII, n. 380: "Natura communis solum est unum de multis, prout intelligitur praeter principia, quibus unum in multa dividitur: unde relinquitur, quod universalia, secundum quod sunt universalia, non sunt nisi in anima".

<sup>110</sup> *De Unitate Intellectus*, Ch. VII, p. 334 (68, Mandonnet).

<sup>111</sup> *De Unitate Intellectus*, VII, p. 333 (66, Mandonnet): "Nec oportet quod scientia quae est in discipulo, causetur a scientia quae est in magistro, sicut calor aquae a calore ignis, sed sicut sanitas quae est in materia, a sanitate quae est in anima medici. Sicut enim in infirmo est principium naturale sanitatis, qui medicus auxilia subministrat ad sanitatem perficiendam; ita in discipulo est principium naturale scientiae, scilicet intellectus agens, et prima principia per se nota. Doctor autem subministrat quaedam adminicula, deducendo consequens ex principiis per se notis....".

to actuate thought in them. He merely "supplies certain aids". What are these aids? He certainly does not, in the natural order, stimulate thought in men by the use of words, and other conventional signs; nor does He do so by the direct production of sensible images in the imagination, as do the angels.<sup>112</sup> For such actions as these imply motion, and God does not act by any motion, as do natural agents,<sup>113</sup> rather, God acts upon creatures "by the very fact that He gives esse, without any motion being involved in the communication of this esse".<sup>114</sup> Specifically, as applied to the human intellect, God causes thought by giving it an *immaterial* esse (since immateriality is the cause of the power of intellection); and by being Himself the first, and the most intelligible, being, and thus causing the secondary and dependent intelligibility of the impressed species.<sup>115</sup>

A man, therefore, can have many teachers, including God Himself. But the universal species informing his possible intellect, are not the same species that inform the intellects of any of his teachers. The species in each man's mind share in the individuality and incommunicability of his own unique subsistent form. The thoughts actually *existing* in the multitudes of intellectual creatures are one only in one sense: namely, in that they have as their single source the intelligible exemplars of things existing in the mind of God.<sup>116</sup> They are "derived" from these exemplars as rivulets flow from their headwaters. But the rivulets are not "in" the headwaters, except metaphorically, and the thoughts of men do not proceed from any single separated intellect, except in the very limited and qualified sense that we have mentioned.

Aristotle, however, did not make fully explicit the doctrine of the autonomy of the individual intellect, and of its survival in the afterlife — perhaps for the same reason that he expressed doubt in XII *Metaphysics*, as to whether the number of separated substances had been correctly calculated according to the number of the celestial spheres. For in the latter case, he knew that separate substances could not be essentially ordained to move bodies; since nothing is ordered to an end which is inferior to itself.<sup>117</sup> So also, in the former case, he must have realized that the intellective soul had some higher end awaiting it than a temporal and material existence; but he couched his doctrine on personal immortality in very general terms, since he did not know the nature of that "higher end".

And thus there is little doubt but that St. Thomas' interpretation of Aristotle was influenced by his Faith, i.e., by the revelation of that "higher end". For if a belief in "personal immortality" was not involved here, Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle's ambiguous references to survival of an individual intellect would be less reprehensible.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS, *Summa Th.*, I, q. 111, art. 1, c.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *In I Sent.*, Dist. XLII, q. 1, art. 1.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, ad 3<sup>um</sup>: "... in eo quod dat esse non per motum".

<sup>115</sup> ST. THOMAS, *Summa Th.*, I, q. 105, art. 3, c. et ad 2<sup>um</sup>.

<sup>116</sup> *Summa Th.*, I, q. 105, 3, c.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. *De Unitate Intellectus*, Ch. VII, p. 333.



## 5. ST. THOMAS' SOLUTION, RE-VISITED.

Averroes might be called a "passivist", in regard to his theory of human intellection. By this I mean that, for Averroes, the process of intellection seems to be a "passion", in the strict sense of the word. It is not perfective of the individual man in whom it takes place. Rather, it ends, it is corrupted, at the death of the individual man. In the human race as a whole, it might be said to be a permanent and perduring perfection; but only in the sense that the generations of men are (according to the hypothesis of Aristotle) eternal.

St. Thomas, on the other hand, might be called an "individuist" — if we prescind from the connotation of excessive subjectivity or individualism which is associated with that word. He defended the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the human intellect, in its own order; that is, with due regard for the dependence of all creatures on God. For only God is unequivocally autonomous. The autonomy which man possesses is possessed in an analogous way — as are also his *esse*, his freedom, and his *intelligere*. But if we concentrate, not on the way in which man's autonomy of thought differs from God's but on the way in which it is similar, we find that there is one pronounced similarity: man can "make" his own thought. Given the appropriate raw materials, man has in his own nature all the necessary equipment, all the requisite tools, for building the edifices of thought.

Granted that man's thought is invested with the attributes of autonomy and spontaneity, the community of men seems to be most similar to that group of artists gathered together in a studio: the gathering that we mentioned in the Introduction as exemplifying the view of human thought processes as something individual and independent. For, just as these artists create reproductions of the same model according to their varying perspectives; so also, in Thomas' formulation, men fashion their own actually intelligible species of the same identical potentially intelligible nature, according to the entitative characteristics of their own soul. And souls *do* differ.<sup>118</sup>

But does St. Thomas, in reacting against Averroes, avoid the egocentric dilemma?

"Objectivity" in the Thomistic context derives from an external referent, the single object or aspect of objects which many focus upon. This provides the criterion for truth; namely, the fact that in cases of doubt we can always return to some one object or objective aspect to provide publicly accessible verifiability. But these publicly accessible "objects" include colors and sounds, political and cultural "facts", aesthetic and moral qualities — all of which, it must be admitted, are to a great extent subjectively induced. It would be difficult to find a purely objective fact or event undistorted by prior subjective experience or cultural background or the eccentricities of one's native language. "A rose is a rose" only in logic books. Granted that objectivity exists, is it wise to hypothesize that it is something external to the mind, separated from subjective distortions at some arbitrary point, e.g. the tips of the fingers? If everything "objective" seems to be laden with subjective aspects, perhaps it would be reasonable to conclude that man's inner subjectivity is equally en-

<sup>118</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *De Anima*, I, 3, 407 b, 20 ff.

dowed with objectivity. If various individual minds are drawn to focus upon something "objective", does the attractive power come only from the external referent, or is there also some internal impetus drawing the mind towards objectivity? If the latter is the case, then it would seem that the orientation to objectivity is rooted in an internal impulse or drive — so that, in a certain sense, objectivity derives from subjectivity and is immanent within subjectivity (as Kant indicated).

Then again, to return to the theme of communicability, which was introduced earlier in this paper: Are there any internal grounds for the possibility of communication, when each man possesses a set of ideas that are distinctively his own? The possibility for communication in St. Thomas' epistemology is grounded in the fact that each individual can compare his representations of an external referent with the representations of others, to "fill in the gaps" that may exist in his own perspective. But how could men compare their insights with one another, unless they trusted in a certain similarity of all ideas — which similarity would give rise to the possibility of "sharing" and comparing thoughts. There can be no differences without pre-existing similarities. Are we to suppose that the *differences* in your idea of a rock and my idea of that rock are all internal or immanent; while the *similarities* are only to be found by reference to the external world, to the object signified or intended?

Perhaps one way to avoid the egocentric dilemma completely would be to presuppose that, in a certain sense, all men are either actually or implicitly part of a massive super-mind or a "communal consciousness", to use the Teilhardian term. This would elucidate a) objectivity and b) communicability, insofar as a) the possibility of objective truth would derive partially from the fact that we all possess the same common mind; and b) the possibility for communication would derive from the fact that our common mind would possess certain common ideas shared by all of us.

Would such an hypothesis destroy the grounds for individual freedom by submerging the individual in some Absolute Ego (as e.g. Fichte and Schelling attempted to do, and as Hegel was accused of doing)?<sup>119</sup> Or is it perhaps possible to salvage the autonomy of individual intelligence, within the compass of a supra-individual mind? If so, this would not only accentuate the significance (in the history of philosophy) of such people as Teilhard de Chardin and (in his own way) Averroes, but also give a firmer philosophical basis to the Christian doctrine of the mystical body.<sup>120</sup>

Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisc. (U.S.A.)

HOWARD P. KAINZ, PH. D.

<sup>119</sup> Hegel's "absolute Spirit", which is widely misunderstood, is not an "absolute ego", but is rather transcendent unity-in-difference of universal Spirit with particular spirits — a unity which gives rise to individual men free and independent in their sphere of existence. Cf. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, IV, S. 140 (Meiner ed.): "Was für das Bewusstsein weiter wird, ist die Erfahrung, was der Geist ist, diese absolute Substanz, welche... die Einheit derselben ist: Ich, das Wir, und Wir, das Ich ist".

<sup>120</sup> Which, as commonly interpreted, seems to imply that, at least in some ideal state of Christianity, individual minds will function as a single intelligent super-personality without losing their individuating characteristics. And thus the "afterlife" instead of connoting a loosely-knit supernatural organization of individual spirits, would connote a new kind of *organism*.