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RICHARD C. TAYLOR  
ADIVVANTE THÉRÈSE-ANNE DRVART

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*Averroes (Ibn Rushd) of Cordoba*

*Long Commentary  
on the De Anima  
of Aristotle*

*Translated and with introduction and notes*

*by Richard C. Taylor*

*with Thérèse-Anne Druart, subeditor*

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*For my wife, Carolyn,  
in thanks for her support and encouragement*

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## Preface

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This book is the result of a collaborative effort, with Professor Thérèse-Anne Druart generously providing invaluable detailed critique, comment, and advice on every part of the project in the role of subeditor, as indicated on the title page. Her expertise in Arabic philosophy and in medieval and ancient philosophy generally, her thoughtful insight, her patient and sustained commitment to this project, and her personal generosity were essential to the success of this project. Still, final decisions in matters of translation and interpretation have been mine, so I must take responsibility for the final form of this work.

Financial support for this project has come from the National Endowment for the Humanities, from the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and from Marquette University. This I gratefully acknowledge, as I also acknowledge with thanks the support of many colleagues in medieval and Arabic philosophy and my colleagues at Marquette University who have encouraged me in the completion of this work and freely shared their expertise, only some of which could be acknowledged in notes. In particular, I want to thank the editors of this series for their continued interest in the completion of this project, which was initiated under the editorship of the late Norman Kretzmann. Finally, I must thank my wife, Carolyn, to whom this book is dedicated. This project is complete only thanks to her support and ceaseless encouragement.

## Note on References and Editorial Method

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In the texts and notes which follow, references in curly brackets { } are to the *Long Commentary* (1953) (*Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima Libros*, F. Stuart Crawford [ed.] [Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953]).

Note, however, that in *Long Commentary* Fragments (2005), Sirat and Geoffroy use curly brackets { } to indicate conjectured text where margins have been cut off. My citations of this work follow their usage.

Square brackets [ ] in the translation are used to indicate my additions, clarifying the meaning with referents and assumed phrases made clear.

Angle brackets < > are used to indicate additions to texts noted by editors or translators of works cited.

+ . . . + indicate text bracketed by Crawford indicating missing or faulty Latin text.

In the introduction and the notes to the translation, I refer to the text of Aristotle's *De Anima* as provided in the *Long Commentary on the De Anima* as "the Text." I refer to the text of the commentary of Averroes as "the Comment."

Other primary and secondary sources are indicated by abbreviated references with author and title and year of publication in parentheses ( ). Full source information is found in the bibliography.

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## Introduction

In 1168–1169, at the age of about forty-two, Abû al-Walîd Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafîd (Averroes), whose grandfather was the famous legal and religious scholar of the same name, had already devoted serious study to Aristotle and the Greek Commentators.<sup>1</sup> This was clearly evidenced in *Short Commentaries* or *Epitomes* (مختصرات *mukhtaṣarât* or جوامع *jawâmiʿ*) on the works of Aristotle, drawing heavily on the understandings of the Greek and Arabic commentators. Yet thanks to Ibn Ṭufayl, the work of Averroes came to be even more focused on the texts and thought of Aristotle, even while he continued his studies and writing on law and theology and also served as *qâḍî* (judge). In this period Ibn Ṭufayl presented Averroes at the court of the Almohad ruler Abû Yaʿqûb Yûsuf, who succeeded his father, ʿAbd al-Muʿmin, champion of the teachings of al-Mahdî Ibn Tûmart (d. ca. 1129–1130) and vanquisher of the Almoravides. As the story goes, Abû Yaʿqûb Yûsuf raised the question of whether the heavens were eternal or had a temporal beginning, much to the distress of Averroes, who knew well that the issue had important religious ramifications since the Qurʾân was held to have taught the temporal creation of the world. Only after Abû Yaʿqûb Yûsuf had displayed his sophisticated understanding of the issue in discussion with Ibn Ṭufayl did Averroes feel sufficiently at ease to join the discussion and to show his own erudition on this matter. Apparently at the request of Ibn Ṭufayl and with the patronage and support of Abû Yaʿqûb Yûsuf, Averroes, appointed *qâḍî* at Seville in 1169, undertook the task

1. With the exception of the *Middle* and *Long Commentaries* on the *De Anima*, which are discussed below, I follow for the most part the chronologies of Jamâl al-Dîn al-ʿAlawî (1986) and Miguel Cruz Hernández (1997), who benefited from Manuel Alonso's (1947) chronology in *Teología de Averroes*. The most recent account of the works of Averroes is that of Gerhard Endress (1999), which is an inventory of "the present state of critical work on the text of Ibn Rushd" (339) and supplements Wolfson (1931) and (1963). Also see Bouyges (1922) and (1923); Gómez Nogales (1978a); Anawati (1978); and Rosemann (1988). For more recent and current work on Averroes and his thought, consult Daiber (1999) and the bibliographies of Druart and Marmura (1990), (1993), and (1995) and Druart (1997b) and (2001). Druart's most recent versions of her "Brief Bibliographical Guides in Medieval Islamic Philosophy and Theology" are available on the Internet. See Druart (2002), (2004a), and (2006). The most comprehensive bibliography concerning Averroes is part of the Internet Averroes Database, located at the Thomas Institut in Cologne and presented by David Wirmer. See Wirmer, Thomas Institut (2006). The 1998 celebrations in honor of the anniversary of the death of Averroes resulted in a great many new studies of the thought of Averroes; a number of these are still in press.

of clarifying the works of Aristotle by pressing ahead with his explanatory commentaries.<sup>2</sup> The support of Abû Ya'qûb Yûsuf is generally taken as the commissioning of what we now have as the *Middle Commentaries* (singular تلخيص *talkhîṣ*). The epitomizing *Short Commentaries* were followed by these paraphrasing *Middle Commentaries* until Averroes apparently completed the first of his *Long Commentaries* (singular شرح *sharḥ* or كبير شرح *sharḥ kabîr*) with the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, probably sometime shortly before 1186.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to his other commentaries, the *Long Commentaries* are neither accounts based on commentators and other sources (*Short Commentaries*) nor paraphrastic summaries of Aristotle's teachings (*Middle Commentaries*). Rather, the *Long Commentaries* contain a complete Arabic version of the text commented (as is the case for Averroes' famous response to al-Ghazâlî in the *Ṭahâfut al-Ṭahâfut*, *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*) and detailed analyses of arguments drawing on the Greek commentators, as well as on thinkers in the Arabic tradition such as al-Fârâbî, Avicenna, Ibn Bâjjah, and others where available. But perhaps what is most remarkable about these *Long Commentaries* is Averroes' efforts in following carefully the text and in providing detailed explanations of the reasoning involved in Aristotle's often terse arguments. In addition

2. The story is recounted in al-Marrâkushî (1949), 242–243. George Hourani translates this account into English in *Decisive Treatise* (1961), 12–13.

3. In her review of Ivry's *Middle Commentary* (2002), Ruth Glasner cites a previously unknown comment by Averroes relevant to the dating of the *Middle* and *Long Commentaries* on the *De Anima*. She translates Averroes' remarks—which, she says, are unique to the Hebrew translation of the *Long Commentary on the Physics* (Paris BNF ms. héb 884, fol. 35b11–16) and not found in the Iunta edition—as follows: “we have the book of animals and we have already completed its commentary according to the signification and we shall further work, if God wills in our life, on its word by word commentary, as we shall try to do, God willing, in the rest of his books. We have not yet had the opportunity to carry out this intention except in the case of the *De anima*, and this book that we start now [the *Physics*]. But we have already laid down commentaries on all his books according to the signification in the three disciplines, logic, natural science, and metaphysics.” Glasner (2004), 58–59. The common notion that the first of the *Long Commentaries* was that on the *Posterior Analytics* in 1180 or 1183 seems no longer tenable in the light of this discovery by Glasner. Cf. Cruz Hernández (1997), 59, and al-'Alawî (1986), 102. Much common thinking about the order of the *Long Commentaries*, as well as the other *Commentaries*, needs to be reconsidered, taking into account the material conditions in which Averroes worked and under which his works were revised and transmitted. For the *Long Commentaries*, see the following items under Averroes in the bibliography: *Long Commentary on the Posterior Analytics* (1962), (1984); *Long Commentary on the De Caelo* (2003), (1994); *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), (1962), (1984); *Long Commentary on the Physics* (1962); and (for the *De Anima*) *Long Commentary* (1953).

to the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, during the last dozen or so years of his life Averroes wrote *Long Commentaries* on the following works of Aristotle, though dates are now far from certain: *Posterior Analytics* (?), *Physics* (1186 or later?), the *De Caelo* (1188), and the *Metaphysics* (1190).

The vicissitudes of religion and politics were both unkind and kind to Averroes and his works. In 1184 al-Manṣûr succeeded his father and continued to hold Averroes in high favor throughout the period in which the *Long Commentaries* were completed. Still, although he had served al-Manṣûr's father as *qâḍî* in Seville and grand *qâḍî* in Cordoba, in 1195 Averroes fell into disfavor with al-Manṣûr and was sent into exile to Lucena, near Cordoba. After an apparent rehabilitation from exile shortly thereafter, Averroes went to Marrakesh, where he died in 1198. Various possible reasons for the exile are given, all or some of which may be on the mark. Some understand it to be merely the consequence of court intrigues and jealousies on the account of al-Marrâkushî or perhaps an attempt by al-Manṣûr to curry favor with conservative jurists of the dominant Malikite school.<sup>4</sup> Still, the possibility that it was due in some measure to a reaction to Averroes' Aristotelian positions cannot be ruled out. His Aristotelian views are not limited to his *Commentaries* and philosophical treatises. Each of the works in his 1179–1180 legal and theological trilogy—*Faṣl al-maqâl* (*Decisive Treatise*), *al-Kashf 'an manâḥij* (*Explanation of the Sorts of Proofs in the Doctrines of Religion*), and the so-called *Ḍamîmah*<sup>5</sup>—reflects an approach to Islamic religion deeply critical of traditional Islamic philosophical theology (*kalâm*) and strongly reflective of his Aristotelian rationalism.<sup>6</sup> These were fol-

4. See Geoffroy (1999), 12; Arnaldez (1998), 28; (2000), 15.

5. As Charles Butterworth points out in his recent translation of the *Decisive Treatise*, also containing this text and a selection from the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, this short treatise, labelled by some as *Ḍamîmah* (Appendix), is a distinct work on the nature of divine knowledge which properly should be understood to precede the *Decisive Treatise*. Butterworth contends that this should be understood as a preface to the *Decisive Treatise*. See *Decisive Treatise* (2001), xxxixff. As Butterworth notes, this understanding was put forth by Muhsin Mahdi in 1964. See Mahdi (1964), 118.

6. On *kalâm* (Islamic dialectical theology), see Gardet (1971) and (1978). There have been numerous attempts to grasp the overall thought of Averroes since Renan's pioneering account of Averroes and his works (1852). These have worked to understand Averroes in his own cultural, religious, and historical context. Although many have offered valuable and intriguing insights, none—in my view—has yet sufficiently captured Averroes' unified perspective and approach, found throughout his legal, theological, and philosophical works. See, among very recent works, those by Fakhry, de Libera, Geoffroy, Benmakhlouf, Arnaldez, Davidson, Leaman, Cruz Hernández, al-'Alawî, and Urvoy cited in the bibliography. Rafael Ramón Guerrero offers an insightful and valuable account of the place of Averroes in the history of the development of views on the relationship of religion and philosophy in the introduction to his *Averroes. Sobre filosofía y*



lowed immediately by his *Ṭahâfut al-Ṭahâfut*, responding to al-Ghazâlî's attack on the *falâsifah* (philosophers).<sup>7</sup> Whatever the explanation, the brief exile and

*religión* (1998). While admitting for Averroes the superiority which philosophy has in interpreting the symbolic language of religion (see, for example, 59), Ramón Guerrero understands Averroes' assertion in the *Ṭahâfut al-Ṭahâfut* (*Incoherence of the Incoherence* [1930], 584; [1969], 361) that religion based on reason (العقل *al-'aql*) alone would be inferior to one based on reason and religious inspiration or revelation (الوحي *al-wahy*) to mean that a natural religion based on reason would be lacking in the social function of binding a community together. Ramón Guerrero (1998), 62–63. In this he cites and follows Cruz Hernández, who writes, "On the other hand, his philosophical works present a 'reading' which he believes to be radically uncontaminated by theology, and in those where Allâh and the Qur'ân appear it is to give thanks to the First for the gift which he gave to man by means of the intelligence of Aristotle and to apply to him some of the expressions which the revealed book reserves for the elect. When Ibn Rushd writes as a Muslim thinker (*Ṭahâfut al-Ṭahâfut*, *Faṣl*, *Kashf*, *Ḍamîma*), he moves on the plane of a [certain] wisdom. Allâh is the fountain, the Qur'ân is the guide. When he writes as a man seeking human knowing, reason alone is the fountain, the Aristotelian Corpus the guide. Perhaps because Ibn Rushd may have been and may have considered himself to be personally (*íntimamente*) more a believing Muslim, he would also more freely be able to think himself a rational and philosophical thinker." Cruz Hernández (1978), 142. Given the dialectical character of the *Ṭahâfut al-Ṭahâfut* (see note 7 below), what requires explication is the nature of the connection between "religious inspiration" or revelation and the valuable social function of religion, as well as the precise nature of that which the term denotes for Averroes. Cf. Taylor (2000b). For a brief account of the thought of Averroes, see Taylor (2003).

7. I understand the *Faṣl al-maqâl*, *al-Kashf 'an manâḥij*, the so-called *Damîmah* (*Question on Divine Knowledge*), and *Ṭahâfut al-Ṭahâfut* (all ca. 1178–1181) for the most part to be dialectical, non-demonstrative works, while Averroes' philosophical commentaries and distinctly philosophical treatises are meant by him to be for the most part demonstrative works. His famous statement on this in the *Ṭahâfut al-Ṭahâfut* supports this view: "All this is the theory of the philosophers on this problem, and in the way we have stated it here with its proofs, it is a persuasive not a demonstrative statement. It is for you to inquire about these questions in the places where they are treated in the books of demonstration, if you are one of the people of complete happiness, and if you are one of those who learn the arts, the function of which is proof. For the demonstrative arts are very much like the practical; for just as a man who is not a craftsman cannot perform the function of craftsmanship, in the same way it is not possible for him who has not learned the arts of demonstration to perform the function of demonstration, which is demonstration itself: indeed this is still more necessary for this art than for any other—and this is not generally acknowledged in the case of this practice only because it is a mere act—and therefore such a demonstration can proceed only from one who has learned the art. The kinds of statements, however, are many, some demonstrative, others not, and since non-demonstrative statements can be adduced without

also the condemnation of his works with the attendant orders for their burning were likely detrimental to the availability of Averroes' writings.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, today a great many of his works are extant, but some of the most important are found only in Hebrew or Latin translation.<sup>9</sup> Among the extant *Long Commentaries* in Arabic and in translations directly from the Arabic, there are texts of the Arabic and of the medieval Latin-from-Arabic translations of the *Metaphysics* and the *De Caelo*, while the *Physics* is extant only in Hebrew-from-Arabic and medieval Latin-from-Arabic translations, and the *De Anima* only in Latin-from-Arabic translation. The *Posterior Analytics* is extant in Arabic but incomplete, while there is a complete Renaissance Latin translation from Hebrew. These *Long Commentaries* generally represent Averroes' most mature reflections on Aristotle's teachings, as well as his own most mature philosophical views. And it is only in his *Long Commentaries*, particularly in those on the *De Anima* and the *Metaphysics*, that Averroes finally resolves to his satisfaction the much vexing issue of the nature of intellect, the philosophical issue which is the primary focus of this introduction. However, before Averroes' ultimate position can be explicated, his much different earlier views need to be expounded to provide a context for his new position arrived at later in life.

### Averroes on Human Intellect Prior to the Long Commentary

Consideration of Averroes' teachings on human intellect for the most part concerns his understanding of the nature of the material intellect, the agent intellect, and the human soul.<sup>10</sup> The Arabic tradition accepted that Aristotle's distinction between active and receptive aspects of intellect in *De Anima* 3.5

knowledge of the art, it was thought that this might also be the case with demonstrative statements; but this is a great error. And therefore in the spheres of the demonstrative arts, no other statement is possible but a technical statement which only the student of this art can bring, just as is the case with the art of geometry. Nothing therefore of what we have said in this book is a technical demonstrative proof; they are all non-technical statements, some of them having greater persuasion than others, and it is in this spirit that what we have written here must be understood." *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (1930), 427–428; (1969), 257–258. Translation slightly modified.

8. For a valuable account of the historical, religious, and intellectual context of Averroes, including discussion of his friends, supporters, opponents, and disciples, see Puig (1992).

9. See note 1 for bibliographical works with lists of extant writings. Also see note 3.

10. Averroes writes of six different "intellects" or intellectual powers of the soul: (1) The agent intellect (*intellectus agens* or *intelligentia agens* usually renders العقل الفاعل *al-'aql al-fa'âl*, though, as indicated in note 20, Averroes does use العقل الفاعل *al-'aql al-*

was a distinction between a distinct active, separate, intellectual entity and a receptive human power of understanding. This position, found in Theophrastus, Alexander, Themistius, and others, is in accord with two assertions. First, in *De Anima* 3.5 Aristotle holds that one of these two intellects is immortal (ἀθάνατον) and eternal (αἰδιον). Second, in *Generation of Animals* 2.3, 736b27, he holds that the power of reason or intellect is not communicated in semen by physical reproduction but comes from outside (τὸν νοῦν . . . θύραθεν).<sup>11</sup> As Davidson has made clear, Averroes held varying views on the nature of the

*fā'il* to denote the same entity) is the active intellect of *De Anima* 3.5. Its role is to actualize intelligibles in potency and to provide them to the receptive material intellect. For Averroes and most thinkers of the Arabic tradition, this agent or active intellect is an eternal, separately existing substance. (2) The term "material intellect" (ὕλικος νοῦς, *intellectus materialis*, العقل الهیولانی *al-'aql al-hayūlānī*) was coined by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *De Anima*. See Alexander, *De Anima* (1887), 81.24; (1979), 105. This is also called "the potential intellect" (العقل الذی بالقوة *al-'aql alladhī bi-l-quwah*, *intellectus in potentia*). For Averroes in the *Short Commentary* this is an individually existing disposition of the forms of the imagination; in the *Middle Commentary* this also exists "in" or associated with each individual, but as intellect it is above imagination as an inchoate disposition provided by the agent intellect at birth and later actualized by the agent intellect in abstraction as the material intellect receives abstracted intelligibles. In the *Long Commentary*, this is the famous separately existing and unique receptive intellect shared by all human beings. (3) The acquired intellect (*intellectus adeptus*, العقل المستفاد *al-'aql al-mustafād*) is the intellect as realized in the immediate moment of the actualizing reception of intelligibles in act. This is sometimes called "the intellect which is in act" [390], though that designation can also be used of the agent intellect [484]. (4) The intellect in a positive disposition (*intellectus in habitu*, العقل بالملكة *al-'aql bi-l-malakah*) is the state of a human being who has come to be positively disposed by the reception of knowledge and who understands such that this knowledge can be easily recalled at will. It is not merely dispositive as able to be disposed but rather positively disposed with knowledge. (5) The theoretical intellect (*intellectus speculativus*, العقل النظري *al-'aql al-nazarī*) refers to the intellect as containing the intelligibles in act. For the mature Averroes this intellect and its intelligibles exist as eternal in the separate material intellect and also as perishable in their individual perishable human subject. Note that (3), (4), and (5) all exist in the human soul and might be considered moments of the same reality, though Averroes does not use that phraseology. In the mature account of the *Long Commentary*, (1) and (2) are also clearly "in the soul" as well. (6) The passible intellect (*intellectus passibilis*, العقل المنفعل *al-'aql al-munfā'il*) denotes the general power of imagination or cogitation in the perishable individual which provides denuded intentions in the process of abstraction. This is "a kind of reason" [449], not intellect per se but rather only equivocally in virtue of its contribution to the process leading to intellectual understanding.

11. Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* (1965).

active intellect, initially viewing it as an emanative cause of the forms of the natural world but finally holding in his mature work that generation is due only to natural reproductive powers and the physical influence of the sun and heavens. In his late work the agent intellect persists for the most part only in its nature as a transcendent power essential to the explanation of human thought through its relationship to the receptive human material intellect, a role it also played in Averroes' earlier works.<sup>12</sup>

The major focus of Averroes' reflections on human intellect takes place in the context of his awareness of the incompleteness of Aristotle's account of human intellect. Like his predecessors in the Greek tradition, Averroes was acutely aware that Aristotle never fulfilled his promise at *De Anima* 3.7, 431b17–19: "In every case the mind which is actively thinking is the objects which it thinks. Whether it is possible for it while not existing separate from spatial conditions to think anything that is separate, or not, we must consider later."<sup>13</sup> What is at issue here is simply the most important and fundamental epistemological question of the Aristotelian and Platonic tradition: Is it possible for human beings while existing in extended physical bodies to think intelligible objects which are separate from physical conditions?<sup>14</sup> For Plato in the *Phaedo* as well as in the *Republic* the body is a hindrance to intellectual understanding, which can be attained fully only by the soul's separation from the body. For Aristotle, with his hylemorphic view of human beings as genuine composites of body and soul, the issue was nevertheless similar to that of Plato. If knowledge consists in an identity of knower and known, with the soul be-

12. See Davidson (1992), chs. 6 and 8.

13. Aristotle, *De Anima* (1984). This is noted by Alexander Altmann (1965), 49.

14. Curiously enough, the converse of this issue is raised in the *Liber de causis* or *Discourse on the Pure Good*, an Arabic work substantially based on the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus and the *Plotiniana Arabica*. In proposition 6 of the Arabic version (7 in most Latin versions), the author of this work draws upon proposition 171 of Proclus in arguing that intelligences are indivisible substances. He follows the argument of Proclus that the indivisible unity of separate intellectual substances is shown in the complete reversion of that substance upon itself in self-knowledge. But he then adds to the thought of Proclus that an intellectual substance lacks extension, so that when it seeks knowledge of a corporeal thing, it cannot be extended with it but must remain fixed in its state and unaffected. This implies that extended things cannot be known with the identity of knower and known appropriate for separate intellectual substances. See (in the primary sources) *Liber de causis* (1882), 72–73, and Proclus (1963), 148–151. The converse of this is that insofar as human beings are divisible particular entities in bodies, they cannot know separate entities with an identity of knower and known while in the body. This seems to indicate an awareness on the part of the author of the *Liber de causis* of *De Anima* 3.7, 431b17–19. Regarding the *Liber de causis*, see D'Ancona and Taylor (2003).

coming not the apprehended object but the form of the object as Aristotle teaches explicitly in *De Anima* 3.8 and implicitly in 3.4, how can the understanding of intelligibles in act take place where those intelligibles are separate from particulars of the world—as in the case of abstraction—or where they are altogether separate from the sublunar world as separate agent intellect or separate cosmic intellect? That is, if human beings are enmattered entities, how will anything more than sense perception be possible? For Averroes this is the question of the nature of the material intellect in itself and in its relationship with individual human beings, a question which dominated his thought and to which he returned repeatedly with varying solutions from his earliest writings on the soul right up to his final resolution in the *Long Commentary on the De Anima* and cited in his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, believed to be the last of his *Long Commentaries*.

Today eight distinct works dealing substantively with the nature of the human intellect and the material intellect by Averroes survive.<sup>15</sup> On the basis of the philosophical doctrine set forth in these works they can be grouped into four categories: initial, middle, transitional, and final positions. The initial period is that of the *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (ca. 1158–1160?), the *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction*, *Epistle 2 On Conjunction*, and probably *Against the Avicennians on the First Cause*. The middle period is represented in the *Middle Commentary on the De Anima* (ca. 1181?). What I call his transitional position is found in his *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*. And, as already indicated, Averroes' final philosophical position on the human intellect is to be found most complete in the *Long Commentary on the De Anima* (ca. 1186); this is also reflected in his *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander*, the Arabic text of which has only recently been published.<sup>16</sup> Also relevant in subsidiary ways are the *Short Commentary on the Parva Naturalia* (1170) and the *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1190).

### Averroes' Initial Position

Averroes' first account on the nature of the intellect in human beings is found in his *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (ca. 1158–1160), also known as his *Epitome* (مختصر *mukhtaṣar*).<sup>17</sup> This is an organized set of notes and arguments on the *De*

15. Elamrani-Jamal (2003), 356–357, like Davidson (1992), 262–264, lists seven works. To these I add *Against the Avicennians on the First Cause* (1997). If the short commentary on Ibn Bājī's *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man*, attached to the chapter on the rational faculty in the *Short Commentary*, is counted separately, the number is nine. See *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1950), 90–95; (1987), 214–221.

16. See *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander* (2001).

17. Some portions of the account which follows also appear in Taylor (2004b). My thanks to the volume editors for permission to draw upon that article here.

*Anima* formed not so much from the direct study of the *De Anima* itself but rather from his study of the Greek commentators and authors of the Arabic tradition, so as “to affirm on the basis of the Commentators' statements on the science of the soul what we hold to concur most with what has been shown in the science of physics and is most suitable with the aim of Aristotle.”<sup>18</sup> It is in chapter 8, devoted to the theoretical power (النظري *an-naẓarī*), that Averroes sets forth his position. He locates the issue in the manner in which theoretical intelligibles (المعقولات النظرية *al-maʿqûlât an-naẓariyyah*) are somehow separate intelligibles in act and yet somehow can be received into individual human beings as human intellectual understanding. Insofar as a human being is a receptive subject which moves from not knowing to knowing these intelligibles, in that person there comes to be the ultimate disposition (استعداده الأخير *istiʿdâdi-hi al-akhîr*) of the apprehension and emergence of these intelligibles (72–73; 106–107; 195–196).

The intelligibles which come to be in the soul are forms received from experience of the world into the external and internal senses as intentions (معان *maʿānin*). Their reception into the imagination, however, is distinct from reception into a physical organ since the displacement of a contrary is not necessary in the case of the imagination. What is more, “The imaginative soul is distinguished by the fact that it does not need an organic instrument for its activity” (74; 108; 197). As grounded in the particularity of the changing experience of worldly individuals, the intelligibles are able to come to be only in those human beings who have experienced them in the world. As Davidson phrases it, “intelligible thoughts . . . share two crucial traits with forms of physical objects and forms in the soul at the subintellectual levels of perception, both of which Averroes terms ‘material’ forms.”<sup>19</sup> These traits are that they are consequent

18. *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1950), 3; (1985), 5; (1987), 99. Page references to the text of the *Short Commentary* in the rest of this section will be parenthetical, referring first to the 1950 Arabic edition, then to the 1985 Arabic edition, and finally to the 1987 Spanish translation. Al-ʿAlawî holds that this work does not follow the pattern of the other *Short Commentaries* and calls it “an anomaly.” See al-ʿAlawî (1992), 807. He is also strongly critical of the editions of (1950) and (1985). See al-ʿAlawî (1986), 53, n. 8, and (1992), 807–811. On this work also see Druart (1994) and Davidson (1992), 265–272. In the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, Averroes refers critically to himself when he writes of Ibn Bājī, “But what made that man err, and we too for a long time, is that modern thinkers set aside the books of Aristotle and consider the books of the commentators, and chiefly in the case of the soul, in their believing that this book is impossible to understand. This is on account of Avicenna who followed Aristotle only in dialectics, but in other things he erred, and chiefly in the case of metaphysics. This is because he began, as it were, from his own perspective” {470}. For a full outline of the contents of the *Short Commentary*, see Ivry (1997b).

19. Davidson (1992), 266.

upon multiple stages of change and that they are individuated by the subjects into which they are received—that is, they are “multiplied with the multiplication of their subjects and numbered by their enumeration.” As such these intelligibles are true (صادقا *ṣādiqan*) in virtue of a subject external to the soul (the thing in the world causally giving rise to the intelligible) on which the imagined form is completely based (80; 116–117; 203).

This process of the generation of intelligibles in the receptive human power called the material intellect requires an agency whereby what is potentially intelligible (the forms in the world and their intentions in the external and internal sense powers) is transformed into the intelligible in act. For Averroes only what already has the nature of intellectuality and is itself intelligent and intelligible in act can be cause of intelligibility in act—that is, the agent intellect (العقل الفاعل *al-ʿaql al-fāʿil*).<sup>20</sup> “For the material intellect needs necessarily for its existence that there be here an intellect existing in act eternally” (88; 126–127; 212). This separate intellect has the essential actuality not present in the material intellect which by conjoining (اتصال *ittiṣāl*) enables material intellects to be actualized so that individual human beings become knowers.<sup>21</sup> “The agent intellect is more noble than the material (intellect) and . . . in itself exists in act (موجود بالفعل *maujūd bi-l-fiʿl*) as an eternal intellect”—irrespective and independent of our understanding and awareness of it—as intelligible, as form, as agent and as “ultimately form for us” (صورة لنا *bi-l-âkhirah . . . ṣurah li-nâ*) (89; 127; 213). This agent intellect actualizes “the disposition which is in the forms of the imagination (الصور الخيالية *fi ṣuwar al-khayālīyah*) for receiving the intelligibles,” the “first material intellect” (العقل الهيولاني الأول *al-ʿaql al-hayūlânî l-awwal*).<sup>22</sup> The reason for this identification is simply that human

20. In the *Short Commentary* Averroes uses both العقل الفاعل *al-ʿaql al-fāʿil* and الفاعل العقل *al-ʿaql al-fāʿil* to denote the agent or active intellect. See *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1985), 123.13 and 127.4.

21. “As Averroes presents it here, conjunction is not a state which one may hope to achieve only at the end of a life spent striving for knowledge; it is not a total and absolute joining of two separate substances. Rather, it is a state experienced when one has truly understood something, it is possession of a particular truth. The Agent Intellect in this construal is not so much the repository of all ideas, as it is the facilitator or actualizing agent for the comprehension of them all. In joining with the Agent Intellect, the individual intellect becomes part of the eternal intelligible world of ideas, to the extent of those ideas which it has mastered. The ideas are part of the intelligible order of our world, its species and genera, for the intelligibility of which the Agent Intellect is ultimately responsible.” Ivry (1997b), 544.

22. فاذا الاستعداد الذي في الصور الخيالية لقبول المعقولات هو العقل الهيولاني الأول. (*Short Commentary on the De Anima* [1950], 86; [1985], 124; [1987], 209). I read الفعل as a typographical error in place of العقل in *ibid.* (1985). This is in agreement with *ibid.* (1987).

thinking (as Aristotle held in *De Anima* 3.8) takes place with the existence of images and does not take place in their absence (86; 124; 209). “By this disposition which exists for man in the forms of the imagination, the soul [in man] is distinguished from the imaginative soul in animals” (87; 125; 210). Not identical with the imagination itself, the material intellect is an immaterial disposition of the soul having as subject by which it exists in a human being the forms of the imagination as receptive of intelligibles. These intelligibles, however, must remain unmixed with the forms of the imagination and so are, we might say, linked but adjacent and transcendent to their subject, the forms of the imagination, since (as Aristotle says following Anaxagoras) intellect must remain unmixed in order to know (87; 125; 210).<sup>23</sup>

This doctrine in the *Short Commentary* is to some degree based on the thought of Alexander of Aphrodisias but is more evidently founded on that of Ibn Bâjjah. For Alexander the active intellectual power to which Aristotle referred in *De Anima* 3.5 is a separate intellectual entity responsible for the realization of intellectual understanding in individual human beings. But the receptive power of the soul, which he termed “material intellect,” he considered a disposition belonging to each human being to be actualized by the transcendent agent intellect, which Alexander identified with God. Yet on Alexander’s view this disposition, though not a body nor in the body as a power, is still intrinsically associated with its subject in such a way that the perishing of the human being and its body also entails the cessation of intellectual activity and the perishing of the individual material intellect.<sup>24</sup>

Ibn Bâjjah’s view is related to Alexander’s approach of considering the material intellect as a disposition, though his more Platonic views on the nature of intelligibles and the intellect would not allow him to follow Alexander in holding for the perishing of the intellectual part of the soul. For Ibn Bâjjah, all human activities have the end of intellectual perfection on the way to the ultimate end of conjoining with separate intellect. As he puts it,

23. As Geoffroy stresses and as will be seen below, Averroes’ understanding of cosmology provided him with a model for explicating the relationship between corporeal powers such as imagination or cogitation and the immaterial power of intellect. See Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 71ff. The *Short Commentary on the De Anima* does not in any explicit way draw upon Averroes’ cosmological views in expounding his understanding of the relationship of the material intellect and the imagination or forms of the imagination. Geoffroy and Steel point out that Averroes seems to have in mind this cosmological model to explain the transcendence of the material intellect in his *Against the Avicennians on the First Cause* (1997), composed in the same period. See Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 71–73.

24. Alexander, *De Anima* (1887), 90.6–11; (1979), 119. Regarding Alexander’s *De Anima* and *De Intellectu*, see Davidson (1992), 30–41.

The philosopher must perform numerous [particular] spiritual acts—but not for their own sake—and perform all the intellectual acts for their own sake: the corporeal acts enable him to exist as a human, the [particular] spiritual acts render him more noble, and the intellectual acts render him divine and virtuous. The man of wisdom is therefore necessarily a man who is virtuous and divine. Of every kind of activity, he takes up the best only. He shares with every class of men the best states that characterize them. But he stands alone as the one who performs the most excellent and noblest of actions. When he achieves the final end—that is, when he understands simple essential intellects, which are mentioned in the *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul*, and *On Sense and the Sensible*—he then becomes one of those intellects. It would be right to call him simply divine. He will be free from the moral sensible qualities, as well as from the high [particular] spiritual qualities: it will be fitting to describe him as a pure divinity.<sup>25</sup>

Transcending the perishable body by its intellectual independence, the material intellect for Ibn Bājja is the receptivity fulfilled by the separate agent intellect through a conjoining of an intellectual sort. The agent intellect illuminates the images of things in the imagination in such a way that human understanding of intelligibles comes about “with no mention of an emanation of thoughts directly from the agent intellect.”<sup>26</sup> In Ibn Bājja’s understanding, individual human beings employ the material intellect toward their realization of intellectual perfection in conjoining with the agent intellect and attaining happiness in a unity with it and all human intellects.<sup>27</sup> This is the highest level of the acquired intellect (العقل المستفاد *al-‘aql al-mustafād*), which involves “the ultimate science which is the forming of a concept (تصور *taṣawwur*) of intellect, i.e. the existence (وجود *wujūd*) of the acquired intellect.”<sup>28</sup> This process is begun with the material intellect, which is understood to be a disposition in the soul illuminated by the agent intellect. Ibn Bājja, as Hyman puts it, “attempts to avoid Alexander’s difficulties by showing that it is corporeal in a secondary sense. This he does by assigning it to the actualized imagination as its underlying subject. Since the actualized imagination is a corporeal form, but not a body or corporeal faculty, the material intellect is corporeal but only in a derivative sense. It follows that the imagination as material intellect possesses the image as its form and that, as a result of thinking, it acquires the intel-

25. Ibn Bājja, *The Governance of the Solitary* (1983), 131–132; (1991), 79–80. Translation slightly modified.

26. Davidson (1992), 145.

27. Davidson (1992), 145–146.

28. Alexander Altmann’s translation of Ibn Bājja, *Letter of Farewell* (1943), section 15, p. 30, in Altmann (1965), 70. Arabic inserted; translation slightly modified.

ligible as a second form.”<sup>29</sup> Regarding the intelligible, Ibn Bājja writes in his *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man*, “it is a form having as its matter the intermediate spiritual forms of the imagination.”<sup>30</sup>

In the *Short Commentary* Averroes does not follow Ibn Bājja on the soul’s ascent into highest unity but rather is content to make use of his thought on the agent intellect primarily in its epistemological function in the process of human knowing. Yet Averroes’ account of the material intellect is clearly that of Ibn Bājja, which he calls true (حق *ḥaqq*) and demonstrative (برهانية *burhāniyyah*).<sup>31</sup> This view seems also to be found in at least three other works by Averroes. In his *Short Commentary on the Parva Naturalia* he attributes our intellectual understanding to reception of intelligibles from separate intellect into the imaginative soul (النفس الخيالية *an-nafs al-khayālīyyah*).<sup>32</sup> In his *Epistle 2 On Conjunction* he holds that the material intellect is a disposition found in the forms of the imaginative soul, not insofar as they are material (that is, particular) forms, but insofar as they are forms.<sup>33</sup> And in his *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction* he writes that “the imaginative forms serve as substrates for the intelligibles with respect to perfection, just as sense is perfected by the imaginative forms.”<sup>34</sup> This also appears to be the doctrine expounded in his *Against the Avicennians on the First Cause*.<sup>35</sup> However, in a revised later version of the *Short Commentary*, done after he had embraced his final position on the material intellect, Averroes complains of having been misled by Ibn Bājja’s account, asserts that the forms of the imagination could not be suitable subjects for the intelligibles because of distor-

29. Hyman (1999), 194.

30. Ibn Bājja, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), 13; Spanish, 30; (1968), 160; (1981), 185.

31. *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1950), 90–91; (1987), 214–216. Cited in Druart (1994), 193. This text is omitted in the 1985 edition.

32. “If all the foregoing is ascertained, it cannot be denied that the separate intelligence endows the imaginative soul with the universal nature (الطبيعة الكلية) that the individual that comes into being possesses, that is to say, with a comprehension of its causes, and the imaginative soul will receive it as a particular (جزئيا) by virtue of the fact that it is in matter. It may receive the individual (شخص) of that which has been comprehended, in reality, or it may receive something similar to it. Just as the intelligence endows one with the universal perfections of the soul and matter receives them as particulars, so here too the intelligence endows the imaginative soul with the final perfection as a universal, and the soul receives it as a particular (يعطى هاهنا الكمال).” (*Short Commentary on the Parva Naturalia* [1972], 79.7–12; [1961], 46; [1949], 109–110).

33. *Epistle 2 On Conjunction*. See Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 226.

34. *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction* (1982), 28.

35. See *Against the Avicennians on the First Cause* (1997), 112–120, particularly 118.

tions and mixture from a subject with its own nature, and refers readers to "my Long Commentary on the book of Aristotle *On the Soul*" (في شرحي لكتاب أرسطو) *fi sharhî li-kitâb Aristû fi n-nafs*).<sup>36</sup>

### Averroes' Middle Position

A new position is found in Averroes' *Middle Commentary* on the *De Anima* (تلخيص *talkhîs*), a work for which the text and dating have been matters of controversy among scholars in recent years. The date given by both al-'Alawî and Cruz Hernández is 1174,<sup>37</sup> but Alfred L. Ivry, editor of the *Middle Commentary*, has argued that the *Middle Commentary* draws upon the *Long Commentary* (usually dated ca. 1190, but now ca. 1186) and is consequently posterior to the *Long Commentary*.<sup>38</sup> What is more, Herbert Davidson has contended that the *Middle Commentary* contains an excursus of two pages which he interprets as an interpolation by Averroes expressing yet another understanding of the material intellect, one identical to neither that of the *Short Commentary* or the *Long Commentary* nor to the original *Middle Commentary*. Davidson has also asserted that the evidence marshalled by Ivry in various articles is not sufficient to show the priority of the *Long* to the *Middle* and perhaps not sufficient even to show the existence of identical texts in both commentaries. Abdelali Elamrani-Jamal also entered the discussion, holding against the view of Davidson regarding an interpolated excursus and against Ivry on the priority of the *Long Commentary*.<sup>39</sup> The most recent comprehensive account of Averroes on intellect is that of Marc Geoffroy, who sides with Elamrani-Jamal.<sup>40</sup> Since these matters are germane to both the

36. *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1950), 90; (1985), 128–129; (1987), 213–214. Cf. *Long Commentary* {398}.

37. Al-'Alawî (1986), 85; Cruz Hernández (1997), 58. Alonso (1947), 84, hypothesizes 1173.

38. Cf. p. xvi n. 3 above.

39. Ivry's views on the priority of the *Long Commentary* to the *Middle Commentary* are expounded in Ivry (1990) and on pp. 10–14 of the introduction to his 1994 edition of the *Middle Commentary*. Also see the following: *Middle Commentary* (2002); Ivry (1995), (1997a), (1997b), and (2001). Elamrani-Jamal's views are expounded in Elamrani-Jamal (1997). For Davidson's thesis on the interpolated excursus, see Davidson (1992), 276–282. For his rejection of Ivry's thesis of the priority of the *Long Commentary* to the *Middle Commentary*, see Davidson (1997); Ivry's brief "Response" is in Ivry (1997a). For an understanding by Josep Puig Montada which integrates elements of the accounts of Davidson and Ivry, see note 51 below. I will address these issues and others mentioned there in detail and at greater length elsewhere.

40. Geoffroy, in Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 42–81, follows Elamrani-Jamal in rejecting the interpolated excursus of Davidson and also rejects Ivry's thesis of the priority of the *Long Commentary*. While much of what follows here regarding the arguments of the

dating of the *Long Commentary* and to the understanding of the concerns which led Averroes to his final position in the *Long Commentary*, translated here, a brief consideration of some of these issues concerning the *Middle Commentary* is certainly warranted.

As is made clear in the notes to the present translation, there are at least eighteen Comments in the *Long Commentary* which have portions of text identical with what is found in the *Middle Commentary*. These range from substantial clauses to entire paragraphs of texts. While in some cases it has been necessary to compare closely the Arabic of the *Middle Commentary* with Latin texts of the *Long Commentary*, in a number of cases a direct comparison of the Arabic of the *Middle Commentary* with the extant fragments of the original Arabic of the *Long Commentary* has made it unequivocally evident that the two works contain numerous identical passages.<sup>41</sup> But the close comparison of the texts has also made it apparent that these two works were done by Averroes at different times. While the two works are necessarily close because both are based on the *De Anima*, the philosophical analysis and interpretation of Aristotle's texts is in a large number of cases quite distinct.<sup>42</sup> What also is apparent

*Middle Commentary* and also *Epistle 1 On Conjunction* is in accord with many of the descriptive accounts of Geoffroy, my analysis of the reasons for Averroes' doctrinal changes is distinct.

41. For the identical passages, see the notes to {8–11}, {13}, {14}, {26}, {30}, {40}, {336}, {370}, {372–373}, {517}, {522–528}, {537}, {538}, {540}, and {541}. All Arabic fragments are printed in the notes to the corresponding Latin texts. The comparison of other fragments to corresponding texts of the Arabic of the *Middle Commentary* also shows differences between the works.

42. This is evident in comparing Comment passages of the *Long Commentary* to their corresponding passages in the *Middle Commentary*. *Long Commentary* (LC), Book 1, Comments 17–18: *Middle Commentary* (MC), paragraph 17; LC 1.22: MC 21–22; LC 1.32: MC 34–39; LC 1.33: MC 40; LC 1.44: MC 55–57; LC 1.48: MC 65–66; LC 1.53: MC 70–71; LC 1.55: MC 73; LC 1.60: MC 76; LC 1.63: MC 79–80; LC 1.64: MC 81; LC 1.65: MC 82; LC 1.66: MC 83–84; LC 1.69: MC 87–88; LC 1.77: MC 95–97; LC 1.79: MC 99–100; LC 1.80–1.81: MC 101; LC 1.82: MC 102; LC 1.85: MC 107–108 to page 40, line 1; LC 2.2: MC 115, page 43, lines 6ff.; LC 2.6: MC 117, page 44, lines 12ff.; LC 2.7: MC 118; LC 2.12: MC 124–127; LC 2.13: MC 128; LC 2.14: MC 128, page 48, line 10, to 129, page 48, line 18; LC 2.19–2.20: MC 131, page 49, line 19 to page 50, line 6; LC 2.25: MC 134–135; LC 2.26: MC 136; LC 2.27: MC 137–138, page 52, lines 15ff.; LC 2.28: MC 138, page 52, line 15, to 139, page 53, line 8; LC 2.32–2.33: MC 142–145; LC 2.51: MC 159; LC 2.56: MC 163, page 62, lines 5ff.; LC 2.61: MC 168; LC 3.8: MC 288; LC 3.9: MC 289; LC 3.11: MC 290; LC 3.13: MC 292; LC 3.14: MC 293; LC 3.15: MC 294; LC 3.17: MC 295 to page 116, line 2; LC 3.18–3.19: MC 295, page 116, line 2, to MC 297; LC 3.24: MC 305 to page 119, line 7; LC 3.25: MC 305, page 119, line 7, to MC 307; LC 3.26: MC 308 to page 120, line 5; LC 3.29: MC 308, page 205,



is that although Averroes certainly had the *De Anima Paraphrase* of Themistius at hand while preparing each work, his use of Themistius was not the same in each work. In one work he made use of the *Paraphrase* for some passages, while at the corresponding passages in the other he did not.<sup>43</sup> The works are also distinguished by the use of the texts of the *De Anima*. For the *Long Commentary*, Averroes uses two texts, his main text, one traditionally ascribed to Ishâq, and a second, alternate translation, while the *Middle Commentary* gives no indication of that alternate translation.<sup>44</sup> What is more, while both works make use of the Arabic *De Anima* attributed to Ishâq, there are indications that Averroes used different redactions of it when composing each of his works.<sup>45</sup> And, as is made clear below, the doctrines of the material intellect in Averroes' *Middle* and *Long Commentaries* are quite different. The *Middle Commentary* holds for a plurality of individual material intellects and a hardly noticed role for the cogitative power; the *Long Commentary* argues for a single transcendent material intellect for all human beings and for a very robust and detailed teaching on the internal powers of the brain, in particular the cogitative power.

With this evidence it is appropriate to conclude that these two commentaries on the *De Anima* were composed as separate studies at different times by Averroes. This becomes evident by consideration of his use of different redactions of the Ishâq translation, his differing uses of the *Paraphrase* of Themistius, his differing analyses of passages of the *De Anima*, his differing division of Books 2 and 3, and his differing doctrines of the material intellect and cogitative power.<sup>46</sup> On the basis of the identical texts in both works which I have been

lines 5–9; LC 3.30: MC 309; LC 3.31–3.32: MC 310 to page 121, line 2; LC 3.35: MC 311, page 121, lines 10ff.; LC 3.36: MC 312; LC 3.38: MC 313, page 122, lines 9ff.; LC 3.39: MC 314; LC 3.41: MC 316 to page 124, line 7; LC 3.50: MC 322, page 126, lines 11ff.; LC 3.51: MC 323; LC 3.57: MC 327, page 130, line 11, to MC 328; LC 3.62: MC 332 to page 132, line 21; LC 3.66: MC 338–339; LC 3.68: MC 340, page 137, line 5, to MC 341.

43. For example, *Long Commentary*, Book 1, Comments 26 and 27 read the *Paraphrase* differently than do *Middle Commentary* paragraphs 27–29. *Middle Commentary* 67–68 uses Themistius, but the corresponding Comment in the *Long Commentary*, 1.49, does not. This is also the case for *Middle Commentary* paragraph 170 to page 65.2, which uses Themistius, while the corresponding passage at *Long Commentary*, 2.63, does not. *Long Commentary* 3.1 uses Themistius, but the corresponding text of the *Middle Commentary*, 276, does not.

44. The text of Ishâq is extant only in fragments; Averroes' alternate text in his *Long Commentary* is Aristotle, *De Anima* (1954). Regarding the text of Ishâq, see below, pp. lxxviff.

45. See below, pp. lxxviii–lxxix.

46. While the *Middle Commentary* observes the divisions of the books of the *De Anima* common today, the *Long Commentary* extends Book 2 to our modern *De Anima* 3.3, 429a9, and begins Book 3 with the account of intellect, starting at 3.4, 429a10. Averroes makes no comment on this.

able to identify in 18 of the 325 sections of *Comment*, it is far from obvious that one can conclude the priority of one work to the other. On the basis of philosophical doctrine, though, as argued below, the *Long Commentary* is more mature than the *Middle Commentary*, as is acknowledged by all parties to recent debate.<sup>47</sup> While Elamrani-Jamal has rightly cautioned that we do not have sufficient information on precisely how Averroes worked on his commentaries to make a firm determination to abandon the traditional dating of the *Middle Commentary* (1174), it is also not unreasonable to hold the priority of the *Middle Commentary* on doctrinal grounds as he too holds.<sup>48</sup> With remarks in a 1997 article Ivry points in the direction of a more subtle understanding of the issue: "Averroes may well have published his *Middle* before the *Long Commentary*, but he did not write it beforehand. This holds true for the bulk of both texts, though it is possible, and even likely, that Averroes made certain revisions in both commentaries, the *Middle* after its initial publication, and the *Long* before its publication. That is, Averroes may well have continued working on his *Long Commentary* after he had published the *Middle Commentary*; the latter based upon a first unpublished draft of the longer and more detailed work."<sup>49</sup>

Given that the *Middle Commentary*'s identical texts—some only short sentences or substantial clauses—are found in only 5.5 percent of the Comments in the *Long Commentary*, it seems plausible that the *Long Commentary* was incomplete at the time of the composition of the *Middle Commentary*. It may well be that Averroes drew upon a common but incomplete work, deciding, while writing these distinct studies of the *De Anima*, to retain some explanations in each but generally to compose each as a separate philosophical study involving separate readings and consultations of the *Paraphrase* of Themistius and separate redactions of the *De Anima* translated by Ishâq. These considerations, combined with the generally acknowledged maturity of the doctrine of intellect in the *Long Commentary* (to which the 1190 *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* refers), make it somewhat more reasonable to conclude for the traditional order of the *Middle Commentary* as completed and released or "published" prior to the *Long Commentary*. For the purposes of this introduction, then, I follow the traditional order in the dating of these *Commentaries*. However, due to a recent discovery by Ruth Glasner, I understand the *Long Commentary* as likely completed by circa 1186.<sup>50</sup>

47. Alain de Libera writes, "If one compares the ensemble of Averroes' writings on the soul to the GC [*Long Commentary*], it seems clear to us that it is this last text which preserves the essential and, according to us, the last state of his theory on the soul and on the intellect." *Long Commentary. Book 3* (1998), 17.

48. Elamrani-Jamal (1997), 292.

49. Ivry (1997b), 516.

50. Glasner (2004). See note 3 above. Also see Geoffroy's analysis of this and his understanding of the relationship of the commentaries in Geoffroy (2005), 760–764.

Based on manuscript evidence and the discussion above, it seems possible to speculate that the *Middle Commentary* was completed shortly before the final version of the *Long Commentary*, perhaps as late as circa 1181.<sup>51</sup> I follow Ivry,

51. "The codices in which the *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* is found contain only two dates for its composition, AH 567/1172 CE and 577/1181, both falling within the period generally attributed to Averroës' middle commentary compositions." *Middle Commentary* (2002), 148, n. 50. Puig (1998), 125, gives 1181 for the *Middle Commentary* and "1187–1190?" for the *Long Commentary*. Endress (1999), 360–361, does not provide dates for the *Short* and *Middle Commentaries* on the *De Anima*. More recently Puig, accepting Davidson's argument for an interpolated excursus (see above, pp. xxviii ff. and n. 39), has suggested that at the time of the original composition of the *Middle Commentary* in 1171, "Averroës did not have access to Themistius' commentary" but did have it when the revised version was completed in 1181. Puig (2002a), 343; (2002b), 32–33. But what Puig proposes is more extreme than Davidson's proposal of a revised version with interpolated excursus since Puig supposes Averroës did not have Themistius for the initial version. While a more detailed examination of this view and that of Davidson cannot be pursued here, two considerations militate against it. First, the extensive use of Themistius by Averroës in the *Middle Commentary*, noted by Ivry (*Middle Commentary* [2002], xv), is documented in his notes and also is sometimes indicated in the notes to the present translation of the *Long Commentary*. That is, Puig's thesis entails that Averroës made a *comprehensive* revision, something not previously proposed or yet established by any study of the *Middle Commentary*. Second, Averroës had access to the *Paraphrase* of Themistius while composing the earlier *Short Commentary*, so its content was not unknown to him when he composed the postulated initial version of the *Middle Commentary*. Nevertheless, the issue of Averroës' methods and habits in revising his works requires much more study, as the following considerations attest. We know that the *Short Commentary on the De Anima* was later emended, as was the *Short Commentary on the Metaphysics*. See Davidson (1992), 235–241 and 265–272. Glasner's study of the *Physics* commentaries leads her to write, "The 'oddities' in the commentaries on the *Physics* can be explained in terms of the first contention, namely, that parts of the middle commentary were written after the long commentary." As she sees it, "the middle commentary [on the *Physics*] was revised and includes passages that are later than the long commentary." Glasner (2004), 60. But not all of Averroës' works show such signs of revision. What is more, just what constitutes a *Short Commentary* as opposed to a *Middle Commentary* is not always clear, as Steven Harvey has indicated. In the case of the *Physics*, Harvey (forthcoming) holds for the conventional order of composition: short, middle, long. A comprehensive study of Averroës' different commentaries also must include consideration of his purpose with each commentary, as suggested by Henri Hugonnard-Roche (1977), 104. As indicated by Elamrani-Jamal (1997), 292, present knowledge of Averroës' revisions and emendations of "published" texts is weak and far from precise. The dating of works which I provide in this introduction should be regarded as tentative and likely to be subject to considerable revision in the light of various projects currently under way.

Elamrani-Jamal, and Geoffroy in declining to accept Davidson's view that the *Middle Commentary's* excursus following the discussion corresponding to *De Anima* 3.5 is a later interpolation with a distinct understanding of the material intellect. My understanding of the issues allows the *Middle Commentary* to be seen as containing Averroës' middle or second major position on the material intellect.

Recent work by Colette Sirat and Marc Geoffroy with the marginal notes in the Modena manuscript of the *Middle Commentary* confirms the view that some version of the *Long Commentary* was available to Averroës when he composed his *Middle Commentary*. Their study, preliminary to the preparation of an edition of the Arabic fragments of the *Long Commentary*, concludes that (i) a first version of the *Long Commentary* was composed before the *Middle Commentary* and is used in it; (ii) the *Middle Commentary* itself was later used in a revision of the first version of the *Long Commentary*; and (iii) the final version of the *Long Commentary* represented in the Latin translation was completed after the *Middle Commentary*.<sup>52</sup> What is more, as they see it, the earlier versions are distinguished from the final version of the *Long Commentary* by "the absence of the long development on the separated and eternal nature of the material intellect."<sup>53</sup>

The doctrine of the human material intellect in the *Middle Commentary* is fundamentally controlled by the issue of the required unmixed nature of human intellectual understanding.<sup>54</sup> Aristotle required that knowing entail the

52. "To recapitulate, the order of succession which seems to result from our analyses will be the following: Averroës initially wrote a first 'Long Commentary,' Sharh 1; this is the text which he used (and cited) in composing the *Middle Commentary*; later, he undertook a substantial revision of Sharh 1, for which he also made use of the *Middle Commentary*: Sharh 1+. In a final period, he resumed work with Sharh 1+ to add there in particular the excursus of [Book 3] Comments 5 and 36, and to take the opportunity to review the rest of the text. In many ways, Sharh 1+ presents only some minor differences with Sharh 2." *Long Commentary Fragments* (2005), 47. "Sharh 2" here denotes the final version as found in the Latin *Long Commentary*.

53. *Long Commentary Fragments* (2005), 48. While it remains to be established whether the early versions of the *Long Commentary* were complete or only partial, Sirat and Geoffroy are certainly right that the *Long Commentary's* teaching on the material intellect marks a distinct doctrinal change. My account of the reasons for that change is detailed below in this introduction.

54. For Geoffroy's understanding of the metaphysical principle at work here, see note 65 below. The *Long Commentary* contends that the position of Ibn Bâjjah (and implicitly Averroës' own position in the *Short Commentary*) must be rejected because its view that the material intellect is a disposition of the imagination entails that what is mover in the generation of knowledge (the imagination, which provides intentions from the senses required for knowledge) cannot also be what is moved (the imagination as what receives the intelligibles in act). See {398} and Book 3, n. 61.



receptive power be unmixed to be able to think all things (*De Anima*, 429a18–21), not have any character of its own except receptivity (a21–22), be in some way nonexistent before thinking (a24), be free of mixture with body and free of bodily organ (a24–27), and be separable from matter to the extent that its objects are separable (b21–23). Though not explicitly referring to the *Short Commentary*, Averroes now seems to find that his earlier view of the material intellect was too closely tied to the body, with its notion that the images in the imagination, a corporeal power, are the subjects for what is called material intellect. This becomes apparent in the examination of his discussion of *De Anima* 3.4 in the *Middle Commentary*, where he devotes much of paragraphs 277 and 278 to concerns about the unmixed nature of the material intellect, even though there is no mention of it in the precisely corresponding text of Aristotle (*De Anima*, 428a13–18). Now the human material intellect must be

completely unmixed with any material form. For, this faculty, which is called the material intellect, if it is to think all things—that is, receive the forms of all things—cannot be mixed with any one form; that is, it cannot be mixed with the subject in which it is found, as the other material faculties are.

(278) If the rational faculty were mixed with any form, then one of two things would have to occur: either the form of the subject with which it was mixed would impede the forms this faculty would receive, or it would change them—that is, it would change the form being received. Were this so, the forms of things would not exist in the intellect as they really are—that is, the forms existing in the intellect would be changed into forms different from the actual forms. If, therefore, the nature of the intellect is to receive the forms of things which have retained their natures, it is necessary that it be a faculty unmixed with any form whatsoever.<sup>55</sup>

Aristotle does raise the issue in the next passage of the *De Anima* (429a18–20), which Averroes paraphrases as follows.

(279) This is what Anaxagoras wanted [to convey] in saying, reportedly, that the intellect has to be unmixed in order to have knowledge, for, if [a form] were to manifest itself in the intellect, it would prevent the appearance of a different form or change it. That is, if any form were to be manifested in this disposition, one of two things would have to occur: either that form would prevent us from knowing a different form which we want to know, since [the intellect's] knowledge of a form is a recep-

55. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 109. Note that in all my quotations of Ivry's translation I have changed his rendering of العقل الهيلاني *al-aql al-hayûlânî* from "hylic intellect" to "material intellect."

tion of it; or the [first form] would change the [other form] when it received it.<sup>56</sup>

This stress on the unmixed nature of the material intellect here requires that it not be conceived as something existing in a subject in the manner of a form in a substance or an accident of a substance. That mixture would interfere with the material intellect's ability to grasp the intelligible form itself. As indicated above, the *Short Commentary's* view is that "The imaginative soul is distinguished by the fact that it does not need an organic instrument for its activity," something which perhaps rightly highlights the nature of imagination as less material than the external senses. Still, the notion that the material intellect could be described as "the disposition which is in the forms of the imagination for receiving intelligibles" appears to have struck Averroes as allowing for an unacceptable mixture with a bodily power.<sup>57</sup> This is because the forms of the imagination would function as potential substrate for intelligibles (that is, as the material intellect) while retaining their own natures.<sup>58</sup> In the *Middle Commentary*, however, Averroes will not permit any such thing and instead provides an unequivocal rejection of his earlier view in the *Short Commentary*.<sup>59</sup>

Averroes is now content only to assert in the *Middle Commentary* that what is called "material intellect" and denotes the ability here and now of human beings to grasp intelligibles as intelligibles in act must not be primarily tied to or in some particular power such as the imagination in the individual corporeal human being. That is, since the very nature of the activity itself which comes about in us is per se intellectual and concerned with intelligibles in act, the activity has to be one of an intellect in the appropriate sense of the term. Yet since we are involved in such activity because we are knowers, we must in the appropriate sense have a capacity for such activity. That capacity qua intellectual is nothing before it thinks per Aristotle, and so the presence of the external agent intellect to the individual human being gives rise to the remote capacity for knowing at the individual's birth.<sup>60</sup> The agent intellect then later joins with the human being to develop this human intellectual capacity into

56. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 109–110.

57. فاذا الاستعداد الذي في الصور الخيالية لقبول المعقولات هو العقل الهيلاني الأول (*Short Commentary on the De Anima* [1950], 86; [1985], 124; [1987], 209). Cf. note 22 above.

58. That is, they would be receptive subjects for intelligibles and at the same time movers (scil. generative causes supplying content) of knowledge had in the intelligibles. Cf. note 54.

59. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 111–12.

60. Averroes was well aware of Aristotle's assertion of τὸν νοῦν . . . θύραθεν, reason or intellect which enters human beings from outside, at *Generation of Animals* 2.2, 736b27. Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* (1965). See [397].

actuality by conjoining, and it does so in a twofold way. The remote but natural human capacity for knowing must be affected by the agent intellect such that (1) a receptive disposition comes to be so that intelligibles can be received (this is the material intellect), and (2) those intelligibles must come to be received in their actuality: "one should not believe that the subject of this receptivity is anything other than a disposition to receive the intelligible, and it is not anything in actuality before it is perfected by the intelligible."<sup>61</sup> In both moments the agent intellect is a causal agent. In this way Averroes is able to hold that the capacity called "material intellect" in us is in fact intellectual in its own nature and unmixed insofar as it receives immaterial intelligibles in act. He is also able to maintain that it is a disposition belonging to us, since its presence comes only from the coincidence of a natural albeit inchoate disposition and a relation realized by the agent intellect in the twofold way indicated. He writes,

It has thus been explained that the material intellect is something composed of the disposition found in us and of an intellect conjoined to this disposition. As conjoined to the disposition, it is a disposed intellect, not an intellect in act; though, as not conjoined to this disposition, it is an intellect in act; while, in itself, this intellect is the Agent Intellect, the existence of which will be shown later. As conjoined to this disposition, it is necessarily an intellect in potentiality which cannot think itself but which can think other than itself (that is, material things), while, as not conjoined to the disposition, it is necessarily an intellect in act which thinks itself and not that which is here (that is, it does not think material things).<sup>62</sup>

This disposition, the material intellect, is essentially a human disposition insofar as it is part of the definition of human beings as rational animals who are able to come to know. Still, it is not fully per se contained in the individual human being insofar as it needs the causal influence of the external agent intellect for the being of the material intellect in the individual. Yet this power of intellect that gives rise to the material intellect does belong essentially to its cause, the agent intellect, which is essentially intellect. Although it is not in full ontological actuality present in the same essential way in the human soul, the agent intellect and its power are operationally and also formally present in the soul as manifested in the material intellect. It is not the agent intellect, simply; it is the lower manifestation of the presence of the agent intellect, which has its own being as a substance apart from its activity of actualizing in a twofold way this disposition, the material intellect. This immaterial disposi-

61. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 115.

62. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 111–112.

tion, which makes knowing possible for individual human beings in the reception of intelligibles in act, is related to the soul of the individual as a disposition of the human being. As such it is not merely some pure disposition but a disposition belonging to a human being, an immaterial disposition essentially conjoined with its substance, a human being.<sup>63</sup> In this way Averroes avoids what he calls an absurd position of locating the "material intellect" in the nature of a separately existing intellectual substance—a position absurd for two reasons. First, it would mean that disposition and potentiality, characteristics of material things, would be said to exist in separate, immaterial intellectual substances which are as such fully active in their being. Second, it would mean that our first actuality and perfection as human beings qua rational animals—namely, our capacity for intellectual development called "material intellect"—would be something eternal, while our realization of this capacity would be generable and corruptible, taking place through time. That is to say, the fulfillment of an eternal entity would be through temporal and generated activities, something which is unacceptable because these entities are not in the same genus.<sup>64</sup>

63. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 112: "For, by our position as stated, we are saved from positing something separate in its substance as a certain disposition (مفارقاً في جوهره) (استعداداً ما), positing [instead] that the disposition found in it is not due to its [own] nature but due to its conjunction with a substance which has this disposition essentially (بالذات)—namely, man—while, in positing that something here (هاهنا) is associated incidentally (بنوع من العرض) with this disposition, we are saved from [considering] the intellect in potentiality as a disposition only." Note that I have changed Ivry's "substantively separate" to "separate in its substance." Ivry's explanation of this in "Averroes' Three Commentaries on the *De Anima*" is that "the material intellect, which represents the potentiality for rational thinking, and as such is the first expression of this faculty in an individual, is connected 'incidentally' (*bi'l-'araḍ*) to the human soul, belonging 'essentially' to the universal Agent Intellect." (1999), 204. For this Ivry mistakenly cites 125.8 of his first edition of the *Middle Commentary*, which in fact has بنوع من العرض, not بالعرض. Geoffroy writes, "The material intellect which thus results from the agent intellect is essentially, insofar as it is intellect, the same thing as it, but considered only under the aspect of reception." Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 67. Davidson (1992), 281, understands this to mean the location of "the disposition, essentially, within the human organism, and . . . in an accidental fashion, in the incorporeal active intellect." The importance of Averroes' phraseology will become evident below, where I expound the grounds for his movement from the teachings of the *Middle Commentary* to those of his *Long Commentary*. See pp. xlii–xlix, lv–lxvi.

64. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 111. As will be expounded below, the position which Averroes adopts in the *Long Commentary on the De Anima* is essentially the one he here calls absurd: "that there should be a separate substance, the existence of which occurs in disposition and potentiality," الاستعداد والقوة, وهو أن يكون جوهر مفارق وجوده في الاستعداد والقوة.

As Geoffroy has noted, the doctrine set forth here is related to Averroes' teaching on the nature of the celestial bodies, souls, and intellects.<sup>65</sup> Averroes asserts the existence of three celestial entities—a celestial body, a celestial soul, and a celestial intellect—as distinct celestial substances. The body moves, and the soul, without being composed with the body, impels it through the desire of an intellectual sort for the separate intellect. This intellectual soul is not composed with the celestial body but is a disposition attached or related to the celestial body. That is, the soul is a disposition in the subject so as to make it move, but it is not mixed with the subject as are material composites. At section 280 in the *Middle Commentary* Averroes similarly describes the material intellect on Alexander's view as "nothing other than disposition only—that is, the potential intellect is solely disposition, not something in which disposition exists. Although this disposition is in a subject, since it is not mixed with the subject, the subject does not serve as an intellect in potentiality. This is the opposite of what obtains with other material faculties in which the subject is a substance—either composite (that is, something composed of form and matter) or simple (the first matter)."<sup>66</sup>

By locating the being of the material intellect in an activity by the agent intellect, Averroes in the *Middle Commentary* has avoided the problem of a

Ibid. Just prior to this passage in section 281 he writes, "In general, disposition is a distinguishing characteristic of matter, and it is impossible for disposition to be found in one genus and its subject in another—that is, that which is disposed to receive something intelligible must be an intellect." Ibid., 110.

65. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 64–65, 71ff. Geoffroy (64) calls Averroes' acceptance of the analogy of the material intellect to the intellectual soul of the celestial body "the second great ontological decision" of Averroes. The first ontological decision, he says (48), is Averroes' determination that a body can only have a corporeal form such that it cannot be apprehensive of other forms. This first decision allowed for the complete rejection of Alexander's account and the acceptance of that of Ibn Bâjjah that the material intellect is a disposition of imagined forms. Yet, as I have indicated above, here in the *Middle Commentary*, Averroes came to reject even the notion of the material intellect as a disposition of the forms of the imagination because of the need for a properly immaterial receptive subject for intelligibles in act in each human being. This is the problem, and the cosmological analogy is the proposed solution of the *Middle Commentary*. Geoffroy and Steel also note that Averroes seems to have had the notion of an analogy of human thinking with celestial movement when he wrote *Against the Avicennians on the First Cause* which appears to date from the time of the *Short Commentary*. See Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 71–73, and *Against the Avicennians on the First Cause* (1997). Also see Twetten (1995) and Taylor (1998a). For a detailed discussion of this and related matters with emphasis on the *De Caelo* commentaries by Averroes, see Endress (1995).

66. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 110.

theory which holds for the material intellect to be something which is a mixture as an accidental or substantial composition, as is the case for Ibn Bâjjah's notion of the material intellect being a higher function founded in the forms of the imagination as its subject. Rather, in the *Middle Commentary* the material intellect is a kind of being which results from the conjoining of a power in an individual human being and a power supplied by the agent intellect in a way ontologically prior to the actualizing of the intelligibles by the agent intellect. This power then is an individual power belonging individually to each human being; that is, there is a plurality of material intellects. That it has a reality of its own apart from the agent intellect Averroes makes clear by reference to the human ability to know both forms and privations. Insofar as it knows privations, which are not positive realities, the material intellect must know itself and also have a nature peculiar to it which makes that possible. This indicates that the material intellect has a nature of its own, distinct from the agent intellect, and is not in fact solely potentiality and disposition.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, this transcendent and immaterial disposition does not have an existence of its own separate from its subject, the human soul, upon which it depends essentially.

With his account of the material intellect as an unmixed receptive disposition and also as a reality distinct in being from the agent intellect which brings it about in particular individuals, Averroes has established that it is a power in the souls of particular human beings<sup>68</sup> and that the essence of the human intellect "is nothing other than thinking things external to it."<sup>69</sup> He has moved away from Ibn Bâjjah's view that the material intellect is a disposition of the imagination by placing it above and outside imagination so that it can be unmixed and able to receive all intelligibles without distortion by a definite and restricting subject in which it inheres as an accident or a material form might inhere. Rather, the material intellect is a real power associated with a subject

67. See *Middle Commentary* (2002), 119, secs. 306 and 307. In the latter Averroes writes, "This statement of his indicates that [Aristotle] considers the intellect in potentiality to be something other than [pure] potentiality and disposition." Cf. 111 (sec. 283), where he says that "Proof that it is not purely a disposition is had in that we find that the material intellect apprehends this disposition devoid of the forms and apprehends the forms, making it possible thereby to think of privations—that is, by virtue of apprehending its essence devoid of forms. This being the case, necessarily, that which apprehends this disposition and the forms which obtain in it is other than the disposition."

68. "Two functions exist in our soul, one of which is the producing of intelligibles and the other is the receiving of them. By virtue of producing intelligibles, it is called agent, while, by virtue of receiving them, it is called passive, though in itself it is one thing." *Middle Commentary* (2002), 112 (sec. 284).

69. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 115 (sec. 294). Translation slightly modified.

(the individual soul) while not being in it as composed or mixed with its subject. Instead, it is related after the manner of the relationship of an intellectual soul to its eternally moving associated celestial body, with the important difference that the existence of the individual's material intellect is dependent on the individual soul. By distinguishing it from the being of the agent intellect, which has a separate existence of its own, Averroes has allowed the material intellect itself to be a transcendent power realized "in" the soul of each human being, who, by that power, is able to grasp intelligible essences of things of the world of experience by a process of abstraction.

The intellect . . . judges the image of a thing, and the image grasps the intention from the sense. Therefore, one who does not sense a genus of sensible objects cannot know it, nor can an intelligible [of this genus] ever reach him. Intelligibles are other than images; for, affirmation and denial are other than imagination, and truth and falsity are found only through combining the intelligibles of imaginative things with one another. Even first premises—of which the time of our [intentioned] sensation is not known to us—undoubtedly reach us from sense, even if we do not know when they reach us from it. Therefore, even though these premises are not imaginative, they do not reach us other than with images.<sup>70</sup>

Again, as in the case of the doctrine of the *Short Commentary*, what guarantees the veridical nature of intelligibles as being the intelligibles of the things of the world is their relation to the agent intellect, which made their existence as intelligibles in act possible. In this way all intellectual understanding on the part of human beings is grounded in the one shared agent intellect, which thereby must provide for the unity of intellectual thought and for any intersubjective discourse. Yet each human being has a unique material intellect by which each is able to become actually knowing. What is more, as indicated above, Averroes has avoided the absurd position that the material intellect be a separate substance in its own right apart from individual human beings by making it part of the essence of human beings, even if the rationality of human nature requires the completion of its disposition by the twofold action of the agent intellect. Hence, by that action on the part of the agent intellect, we come to have knowledge by the reception of intelligibles in our own individual souls thanks to this realization and fulfillment of our inborn powers as our now actualized material intellects.

In light of the foregoing account of the unique agent intellect and its causal activity of preforming, preparing, and actualizing the individual material intel-

70. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 123 (sec. 314). Translation slightly modified. On the grasp of first intelligibles in al-Fârâbî, see Druart (1997a).

lect, it is not surprising that Averroes employs the *Short Commentary*'s descriptive expression "form for us" in the *Middle Commentary* to characterize generally the relationship of the separately existing agent intellect to the human soul.

It is clear that, in one respect, this intellect is an agent and, in another, it is form for us (صورة لنا *ṣûrah la-nâ*), since the generation of intelligibles is a product of our will. When we want to think something, we do so, our thinking it being nothing other than, first, bringing the intelligible forth and, second, receiving it. The individual intentions in the imaginative faculty are they that stand in relation to the intellect as potential colors do to light. That is, this intellect renders them actual intelligibles after their having been intelligible in potentiality. It is clear, from the nature of this intellect—which, in one respect, is form for us (صورة لنا *ṣûrah la-nâ*) and, in another, is the agent for the intelligibles—that it is separable and neither generable nor corruptible, for that which acts is always superior to that which is acted upon, and the principle is superior to the matter. The intelligent and intelligible aspects of this intellect are essentially the same thing, since it does not think anything external to its essence. There must be an Agent Intellect here, since that which actualizes the intellect has to be an intellect, the agent endowing only that which resembles what is in its substance.<sup>71</sup>

That is, insofar as the generation of intelligibles must be considered "a product of our will" and insofar as it is we who are thinking, the agent intellect is not outside and separate, acting only as agent or efficient cause. Rather, it is intrinsic as "form for us," such that the agent intellect is "our final form" (الصورة الأخيرة *aṣ-ṣûrah al-akhirah la-nâ*) and is appropriately said to be a formal cause in us in some fashion.<sup>72</sup>

You ought to know that Themistius and most commentators regard the intellect in us (العقل الذي فينا *al-'aql alladhî fî-nâ*) as composed of the intellect which is in potency and the intellect which is in act, that is, the Agent Intellect. In a certain way it is composite and does not think its essence but thinks what is here, when the imaginative intentions are joined to it. The intelligibles perish due to the passing away of these intentions, forgetting and error thus occurring to [our intellect]. They interpret Aristotle's statement in this manner, as explained in our commentary on his discourse.<sup>73</sup>

71. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 116 (sec. 297). Translation slightly modified.

72. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 116 (sec. 298).

73. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 117 (sec. 299).

Precisely what Averroes has in mind here by this characterization of the agent intellect as "form for us" and "our final form" will become more clear below through consideration of this teaching in the *Long Commentary* and the importance of Averroes' reconsideration of the account of Themistius in the latter's *Paraphrase of the De Anima*.

### *Averroes' Transitional Position*

The position on the material intellect and the nature of intellectual understanding which Averroes reaches in the *Middle Commentary* is in many respects like that found in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*, as noted by Davidson and Geoffroy.<sup>74</sup> In this work Averroes argues again that "what is called 'material intellect' has only the sole nature of possibility and disposition since it is mixed neither with matter nor any sensible natures. That is why this disposition is not anything existing in a subject."<sup>75</sup> He then goes on to argue that if it were like sensible forms or it were in another subject, it would not have the nature of an intellect which is able to know its own essence when it becomes the intelligibles in the activity of knowing for which its existence was asserted.<sup>76</sup> The nature of the material intellect, then, is like that explained "in *Physics* 8 regarding the first separate power, that this is not divisible by way of the division of bodies nor is it mixed with matter."<sup>77</sup> And earlier in this work he had held that a basic principle of his account here is that the causality of the agent intellect in relation to the material intellect is not merely that of efficient causality common

74. Davidson (1992), 274–275. Geoffroy and Steel (2001) provide an edition of the *De Beatitudine Animae* with extensive studies and notes, as well as French translations of the two Hebrew *Epistles* and the Latin *De Beatitudine Animae*. My account of *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*, the later of the two *Epistles* according to Geoffroy, is based on Geoffroy's French translation. The *De Beatitudine Animae* is a treatise on the perfection and fulfillment of human nature by way of knowledge via conjunction with the separate agent intellect. Wrongly attributed to Averroes and based on those two *Epistles* and an extract from al-Fârâbî's *Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* (المدينة الفاضلة) كتاب مبادئ آراء أهل المدينة الفاضلة *Kitâb mabâdî' ârâ' ahl al-madînah al-fâdilâh*: see al-Fârâbî, *Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* [1985]), this work is a Latin concoction which arose out of the Hebrew philosophical tradition. For more details on this work and its content and origins, see Davidson (1988) and Geoffroy and Steel (2001).

75. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 204. I render *préparation* as "disposition" here and throughout, understanding it to correspond to استعداد *isti'dâd*, ἐπιτηδεύσις.

76. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 208.

77. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 210. Averroes also argues here that the material intellect may be an immaterial disposition and a substance since it is not delimited by its relation to body. He may also have in mind that such an immaterial reality is per se one because of its lack of a relation of delimitation and enumeration by body.

to the movement of bodies but also that of formal and final causality. "Separate intellects are forms for [the souls of the spheres] and also their ends, because it is by [the separate intellects] that the being and the activity of [the souls of the spheres] are attained, since [the separate intellects] become the object of a representation on the part [of the celestial souls] and since these strive to assimilate themselves to [the separate intellects]."<sup>78</sup> In this way the separate intellects act as formal and final causes for the celestial souls, which are not in the celestial bodies as in a subject but associated with them as movers in a way unlike what is found in the sublunar realm.<sup>79</sup> In light of these considerations, therefore, Averroes raises a question concerning what will be a central doctrine in his teachings in the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*: What is there to prevent our thinking that some dispositions might be able to exist in the way the celestial souls exist—that is, as attached to celestial bodies but not composed with them as in a subject and also as having their final and formal cause in a way separate from them?<sup>80</sup> What is more, he continues, "it seems, on the issue of this disposition, that it is a substance one in number for all human beings in itself, but many by accident, which is not the case for material forms."<sup>81</sup> Averroes does not pursue the issue of the nature of the material intellect further in this work but is content to leave it aside for a more profound study at another time.

As Geoffroy makes clear in his study of this text and of the development of Averroes' doctrine of the material intellect, the very suggestion of this analysis, the posing of this question and the insinuation of the consequence of a single material intellect for all human beings, is the first anticipation of the *Long Commentary's* teaching of the material intellect as a separately existing intellectual substance with the nature of receptivity only and as one for all humankind. This is an exciting and valuable discovery which places *Epistle 1 On Conjunction* both after the composition of the *Middle Commentary* and before the final version of the *Long Commentary*.<sup>82</sup> But it remains to consider the question of Averroes himself: What prevents the assertion of this view of the material intellect at this stage in Averroes' thought?

As we have seen, in the *Short Commentary* Averroes was concerned to establish with Ibn Bâjjah that the material intellect is not mixed with the body and

78. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 200. "Representation" here indicates intellectual understanding on the level of the celestial soul.

79. Substantial discussion of cosmology and intellectual thought among celestial entities is beyond the parameters of this introduction. For a valuable account of relevant cosmological considerations at work here, see Twetten (2007).

80. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 210.

81. Ibid.

82. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 48–51, 68–69, 261.

so followed Ibn Bâjjah in holding it to be a disposition of the forms of the imagination. In the *Middle Commentary*, he appears to have been concerned over the implications of the doctrine found in the *Short Commentary*—namely, the notion that the material intellect is a disposition of the forms of the imagination in such a way that it was in them as being in a subject. But even to be in a subject would normally mean being composed with the subject either as an accident or as a material form. Yet such composition would be contrary to the nature of the material intellect as something which must be without matter, unmixed and receptive without distortion of the intelligibles it receives. Hence, the material intellect must have a nature similar to that of the celestial souls, which are only equivocally “in” the celestial bodies. That is, the celestial souls, are associated movers of the celestial bodies but do not exist in the celestial bodies as in a subject with which they are composed. Similarly, the material intellect is not in the human soul after the manner of a composition, but rather it is a disposition associated with the human soul and its intentional powers but necessarily free from composition with the soul. In each of these two works Averroes holds for the existence of material intellects in or associated with powers of individual souls in such a way that there is a plurality of material intellects. The analogy yields the following:

many celestial souls	:	many material intellects
many celestial bodies	:	many human souls
many celestial intellects	:	one agent intellect

How then could he come even to suggest in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction* such a contrary view as the notion of there being one material intellect for all individual human beings? There are several possible ways to consider this.

First, since in the *Middle Commentary* Averroes has come to base his understanding of the human material intellect on the analogy with the celestial soul for the sake of accommodating the unmixed nature of the material intellect, it may be that he has merely extended the analogy further. That is, each of the unique moving celestial bodies has its own unique celestial soul causing its movement through the soul’s conceptualization of its unique celestial intellect above it.<sup>83</sup> But in the analogy, the one agent intellect stands in the place of the many unique celestial intellects. Given that there is one agent intellect for all human beings, then analogously there should perhaps be one corresponding material intellect for all human beings. Yet this simple correspondence is hardly an argument of sufficient persuasive force.

83. On the issue of Averroes’ celestial cosmology and its development, see Endress (1995), particularly 24ff., where the issue of the celestial soul’s conceptualization (تصور بالعقل *taṣawwur bi-l-‘aql*) of its separate intellect is discussed.

Second, the issue of the nature of the causality of the agent intellect in relation to the material intellect may contribute to the argument. Perhaps one of the most vigorously argued issues in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction* is the notion that the agent intellect is only an agent or efficient cause. Averroes attributes this notion to Alexander and asserts that it was also held by al-Fârâbî, who was sorely misled by it.<sup>84</sup> Averroes writes that the understanding of the issue of conjoining with the material intellect is based on two principles, the second of which concerns knowledge of the way in which the separate intellect is the cause that the material intellect becomes an intellect in act. This concerns knowing whether

it is the cause of it only in the way of the agent and moving cause, as natural movers, such as the light of the sun which is cause of sight in potency and brings it to a state of act; or such as the movement of the sphere and what follows upon it, namely the light and darkness which are cause of warmth and cold. For this movement and what follows upon it are cause of the being of natural existents and bring them from potency to act. And all these natural movers are agent causes and no other sort of cause at all, because they are not causes of the matter, form or end, since every natural body has a determinate matter, a determinate form and a determinate end.<sup>85</sup>

Averroes then goes on to assert that the separate intellect, scil. the agent intellect, may be their cause as form and end as are the celestial intellects for the celestial souls. This takes place insofar as the separate intellects provide the forms and the ends for the celestial souls since the being and activity of the celestial souls are founded on the intellectual representation of the celestial intellect in the celestial soul. That is, the actuality of intellect in the associated separate intellect provides the final cause toward which the celestial soul strives. That striving takes place by the conceptualization of its associated separate intellect in imitation within the limits of its nature. Through this it also achieves its own perfection and end. In this way by final causality the associated separate intellect provides the final and formal cause of the celestial soul which moves the celestial body in perfect motion. On this account, then, the separate intellect is the formal, final, and agent cause of the being and

84. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 216. Averroes several times discusses al-Fârâbî’s change late in life to the view that the human immortality through intellectual conjoining is “an old wives’ tale.” See Averroes’ remarks in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*, Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 220; *Epistle 2 On Conjunction*, Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 230; and *Long Commentary* [43]. Also see Pines (1978) and (1979); Davidson (1992), 70–73. The source of this in Ibn Bâjjah is identified with precision by Harvey (1992a), 225 n. 56. This issue is discussed at length in Taylor (2005).

85. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 200.



activity of its associated celestial soul. All this was stated by Averroes to explain by analogy the nature of the relationship of the agent intellect and the material intellect, which are understood to be related as the associated separate intellect is related to its celestial soul. Since he holds that there is one agent intellect for all human beings, then it may well follow in his mind that it is reasonable to assert that there is one material intellect for all human beings. If there is one agent, formal, and final cause for all human beings, the unique agent intellect, then perhaps there must be one effect in which that causality is manifest (a unique material intellect shared by all human beings). This analogical account is more persuasive than the simple correspondence mentioned above, but it is not yet compelling.

Third, is there something about the very nature of intellection at issue here? Theophrastus and other ancient commentators, writes Averroes, thought that the material intellect should be understood in accord with the nature of matter and that conjoining should be considered on analogy with the composition of matter and form insofar as matter has the nature of potency. But Alexander, he continues, thought of material intellect only as a disposition in the soul and a substance receiving the forms of existing things. For Averroes, however, this is severely problematic since it means that the material intellect will be composed with the forms it receives. If it is like what it receives, then it will be like sensible forms, with the result that the material intellect would be a composite plurality and not be able to know the sensible forms *as intelligibles*. What is more, the material intellect was in fact asserted by Aristotle in *De Anima* 3.4 to be a power which understands the essences of things—that is, the intelligible forms of things without their matter—in order to account for human knowing, which is so different from the sense perception of individuals. The intelligibles in the material intellect, then, have in them “nothing other than the quiddity of the intelligible. And if it were not so, then [the intellect] would not be able to know its own essence. Thus, a thing [which is not of this order] does not know its own essence.”<sup>86</sup> Filling in the argument of Averroes, we may say that the material intellect as intellect is an immaterial entity and a unity which should be able to know its own essence. (Recall the discussion above of the material intellect’s knowledge of privations within itself in the *Middle Commentary*.) Hence, given that the material intellect knows its own essence and given that the agent intellect is its perfection as its agent, formal, and final cause,<sup>87</sup> what the material intellect knows in knowing itself

86. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 208.

87. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 216: “The agent intellect is not cause of the material intellect in as much as it is agent only, but in such a way that it is also its final perfection in the way of formal and final cause, as is the case of sense in relation to the sensed.”

and its own essence would be the agent intellect in its actuality in the material intellect.

That course of reasoning could—with additional premises—lead to the assertion that there is one material intellect for all human beings, but Averroes does not draw that consequence. He elects instead to expound the view that the actualization of the material intellect results in the theoretical intellect, which contains the intelligibles abstracted from the experience of things.<sup>88</sup> He writes that “it seems that this disposition by which a human being receives the separate intellects<sup>89</sup> is what is received by and comes to be in the theoretical intellect at the completion of its realization, so that the relation of this disposition to the realized acquired intellect is [similar to] the relation of the disposition that is called the material intellect to the soul.”<sup>90</sup> This takes place in relation to individual souls, so Averroes goes on to consider the question of why the intellectual excellence of the material intellect does not take place in each person’s soul. Teleological necessity in nature requires that the material intellect, which is in potency, be actualized at the level of the species.<sup>91</sup> That is, it is not necessary that each person manifest the presence of the material intellect and each person be conjoined with the agent intellect via the material intellect, though it is necessary that it be attained for the species by some individual. This is dictated by the nature of the material intellect and the nature of human community in the context of divine providence, which makes nothing in vain.<sup>92</sup>

These three considerations are relevant to the issue of the material intellect, but neither separately nor together are they sufficient to provide a substantive philosophical argument for a single shared separate material intellect, even though Averroes himself makes precisely that suggestion in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*. Must we, then, take Averroes at his word when he says he must leave the issue because it requires a more profound study in its own right? As indi-

88. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 218. Cf. pp. xxiii–xlii above for the account of generation of intelligibles in the *Middle Commentary*. As will be evident in what follows, the underlying problematic issue is that of the unity of intelligibles in act and the unity of human knowing. That is, are the intelligible essences of scientific discourse multiplied with the multiplication of individual material intellects, or are intelligibles in act a single set of unique intelligibles to which human discourse refers?

89. That is, the material and agent intellects.

90. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 218.

91. Averroes provides the argument for the necessity of what is in potency to come to be in act. He concludes the discussion with these words: “Then the consequence necessarily is that the material intellect must become an intellect in act at some moment.” Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 214.

92. Remarks by Averroes at Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 218 and 220, imply this.

cated above, Averroes does not assert the existence of a unique material intellect shared by all human beings in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction* but rather asks what would prevent one from asserting the existence of a material intellect, "one in number for all human beings in itself, but many by accident." The answer to the question can be found through a careful analysis of the issue of "separation" as raised in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*.

As indicated above, the account of the human material intellect in the *Middle Commentary* had this human receptive disposition as a power not composed with or in the body as sight or imagination but rather as a separate power of an immaterial nature which, qua immaterial, cannot literally be in or composed with the body. Its nature as a power receptive of intelligibles in act abstracted from intentional images provided by imagination thanks to sense perception required that this power, the material intellect, be itself immaterial and separate for the reception of immaterial intelligibles in act. This is dictated by the very natures of the immaterial intelligibles in act by which human knowing comes to exist. Still, like the relationship of the celestial intellect to the celestial soul or the celestial soul to the celestial body, the relationship of the material intellect to the human soul must be one whereby a particular material intellect is "in" or necessarily associated with a particular human soul. This analogy breaks down insofar as the celestial body, the celestial soul, and the celestial intellect are separate substances in their own natures, while the material intellect—which is indeed separate from the human being insofar as the material intellect is neither a body nor a power in a body—is not separate from the human corporeal soul inasmuch as it is a particular power belonging to a particular human being.

In this context "separation" is an equivocal term with two very distinct senses which require clarification with precision. Separation<sub>1</sub> denotes a relation such that there is an essential connection of what is separate with a determinate subject. Separation<sub>1</sub> is found in the *Middle Commentary* in the essential relation of a separate particular material intellect to its particular subject, the human soul. On that account, the being of the separate particular material intellect was that of a disposition dependent on the subject to which it belongs or which it is equivocally "in." In *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*, Averroes appears to criticize this view when he explains that by "separation" Aristotle may have meant merely that it is not a power of the body nor divisible with the division of the body.<sup>93</sup> Separation<sub>2</sub> denotes a complete ontological separation such as that of the first separated power (the First Mover) of *Physics* 8, which is not

93. "Perhaps he meant to indicate by 'separation' that it is not a power [in the body], divisible according to its division, even if it displays necessarily a dependence in relation to the body by way of the soul." Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 210.

divisible in relation to what it affects, "not divisible according to body or mixed with matter."<sup>94</sup> Separation<sub>2</sub> properly characterizes the celestial body, the celestial soul, and the celestial intellect. The view that the material intellect is "one in number for all human beings in itself, but many by accident" requires this separation<sub>2</sub> and is precisely the mature teaching of the *Long Commentary*, in which one material intellect is shared by a plurality of individuals, as will be explained at length below. Yet what prevents precisely such an assertion?

The controlling issue present here is that of the nature of intelligibles in act and their required subject. In the *Middle Commentary* each human being has an immaterial, separate<sub>1</sub> individual material intellect into which intelligibles in act are received. These intelligibles in act constitute the content and activity of human knowing brought about by the presence of the agent intellect and its activity in each human material intellect. The content of those intelligibles in act comes from human experience of the world by way of intentions of the imagination abstracted by the agent intellect and brought about in the individual material intellect of the human being who provides those intentions. As such, the agent intellect does not provide the intentional content of intelligibles in act in the human material intellect. In this case, then, the intelligibles in act are multiplied in accord with the multiplication of individual human knowers. The intelligible in act or essence of "horse" will be multiplied and idiosyncratic to each individual human knower. However, on such a view the unity of scientific understanding and intelligible discourse would seem to be undermined since there would be no common referent for the intelligible understandings taking place in each distinct human being.

It is precisely this conception of intelligibles in act as multiplied in the material intellects of many human beings in the teaching of the *Middle Commentary* that prevents the assertion of a single transcendent material intellect, "one in number for all human beings in itself, but many by accident." As seen above, in the *Middle Commentary* Averroes scoffingly rejected this notion of a material intellect existing in separation<sub>2</sub>.<sup>95</sup> In order to overcome the limitations of his earlier view, then, Averroes had to come to a new understanding of the nature of intelligibles in act such that there is a single set of intelligibles in act which are the common referents for scientific understanding and discourse. Such a view is found in the *Long Commentary* and is developed by Averroes in critical dialogue with the teachings of Themistius in his *Paraphrase* of the *De Anima*.

94. Ibid. Geoffroy identifies the precise reference to the *Physics* of Aristotle as 266a 10–b6. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 261.

95. *Middle Commentary* (2002), 111.



Averroes' Final Position on Intellect:  
*The Long Commentary on the De Anima*

With its 325 sections of Text and Comment, the *Long Commentary* provides detailed critical reflections on all the parts of the *De Anima* in the order of the work set forth by Aristotle, from the First Book's opening considerations of methodology, through its mention of issues and the positions of the predecessors of Aristotle, through the Second Book's discussion of soul, body, and external and internal senses, and on through the Third Book's detailed discussions of intellect and concluding sections concerned with movement on the part of the soul. For his commentary, Averroes draws on works on soul and intellect by Alexander, Theophrastus (through Themistius), Themistius, al-Fârâbî, and Ibn Bâjjah, while making references to the thought of Plato, Galen, Avicenna, and others, as well as to other works of the Aristotelian corpus. While the *Middle Commentary* makes no reference to the *Short Commentary*, as noted above the later version of the *Short Commentary* contains a note referring the reader to Averroes' mature views in the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*. For its part, the *Long Commentary* does contain implicit reference to the teachings of the *Short Commentary* by way of its refutation of Ibn Bâjjah and the doctrine that the material intellect is the imagination insofar as the forms of the imagination are the subjects for the disposition called material intellect.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, the Arabic version of the *Long Commentary*, which survives only in Latin translation and in Arabic fragments, is a work which stands alone without any requisite argumentative reference in its teachings to Averroes' earlier commentaries on the *De Anima*.

With a structure different from the topical divisions of the *Short Commentary* and the traditional division of the work into three "discourses" or books (مقالات *maqâlât*) of the *Middle Commentary*, the *Long Commentary* also charts a distinctive course.<sup>97</sup> In this work Book 3 begins with the discussion of intellect traditionally placed in Book 3, chapter 4. That is, Averroes has chosen to extend the account of Book 2 up to the end of Aristotle's discussion of imagination and to begin Book 3 where Aristotle initiates discussion of the soul which "knows and understands" {379}.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the doctrine of the intellect, and es-

96. See above, pp. xxv-xxviii. It may also refer to Averroes' *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander*.

97. On the divisions of the text of the *De Anima* in the Arabic tradition, see Elamrani-Jamal (2003), 351.

98. Averroes makes no comment on his procedure, so perhaps he took it to be self-evident that discussion of all bodily powers of soul should be placed with discussion of soul and sensation in Book 2 and the non-bodily powers of intellect should be seen to be the key concern of Book 3.

pecially that of the material intellect, in the *Long Commentary* can be considered a distinct study of intellect and its issues where Averroes sets forth his considered final position, with arguments for the most part located in Book 3, though important and relevant issues arise in the earlier books.

*The Science of the Soul  
 and Metaphysics*

That Averroes thought the most compelling issue addressed by his commentary on the *De Anima* was that of the nature and status of the material intellect is evident early on when he comments on Aristotle's remarks in Book 1 that the science of the soul has a special position of priority among the sciences because of its exactness and because of its objects. Its exactness is constituted in its use of the method of demonstration; its objects are living things in which the presence of soul is evident. But for Averroes the science of the soul has a function in reference to the science of metaphysics not mentioned in any explicit way by Aristotle: "The practitioner of divine science gets from it the substance of his subject. For here [in the science of the soul] it will be explained that the separate forms are intelligences and also many other things concerning the knowledge of states consequent upon intelligence considered as intelligence and intellect" {5}. It is in the science of the soul that the existences of the agent intellect and the material intellect as separate, immaterial entities are established. Thinking ahead to his understanding of Aristotle's account of these two intellects in *De Anima* 3.4 and 3.5, Averroes has in mind that the particular intentions grasped in the perceptions and activities of the external and internal senses require the involvement of transcendent intellectual powers. Intelligibles in potency found in the world and in the soul's powers give rise to the intelligibles in act constituting the intellectual understanding of things characteristic of human thought. This knowledge of intelligibles in act as universals is the essence of science applicable to many particulars and not bounded by reference only to a certain individual. Understanding this to be necessarily the activity of what is intellectual and immaterial, Averroes considers the science of the soul to be responsible for establishing the existence of immaterial entity as intellectual in nature. While physics had proven for him the existence of an ultimate separate mover, the proof of the nature of this mover was beyond the limits of the science of physics. Philosophical psychology's proof that intellect exists and is necessarily immaterial provides one instance of the evidence sought by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 6, where he wrote, "If there is no substance other than those which are formed by nature, natural science will be the first science; but if there is an immovable substance, the science of this must be prior and must be first philosophy, and universal in this

way, because it is first. And it will belong to this to consider being *qua* being—both what it is and the attributes which belong to it *qua* being.”<sup>99</sup>

The full import of this for Averroes’ philosophical methodology is evident when he cites the same issue in his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, a work written after the final version of the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*:

It is fully clear that these celestial bodies are alive and that among the powers of soul they have only intellect and the power of desire, i.e. [intellect] which causes motion in place. This is perhaps evident from what I say, for it has been explained in the eighth book of the *Physics* that what causes motion belonging to the celestial bodies is not in matter and is a separate form. And it was explained in the *De Anima* that the separate forms are intellect. So, consequently, this mover is an intellect and is a mover insofar as it is an agent of motion and insofar as it is the end of motion.<sup>100</sup>

Averroes does not elect here to exploit philosophical psychology’s epistemological arguments for constructing a proof of the existence of immaterial being, but instead chooses only to draw on its identification of immaterial substance as intellect. Averroes does exploit the results of the study of psychology for another key metaphysical principle. Not only has philosophical psychology provided the establishment of the subject matter of the science of metaphysics by showing the existence of a substance immaterial, intellectual, and not formed by nature (and hence not included under the science of physics), but it has also given evidence of the existence of a form of potency existing in separate intellectual substances. By its proof of the nature and separate existence of the material intellect, psychology has proven that a kind of potency can exist in what is intellect, for the material intellect, as discussed in detail below, is essentially a receptive disposition for intelligibles of things of the world while itself being separate intellect. And by establishing that a kind of potency can exist in what is separate intellect, psychology, as Averroes understands it, provides metaphysics with the basis for a ranked hierarchy of intelligences or intellects distinguished from one another and from the pure actuality of the First Cause.<sup>101</sup> In Book 3 of his *Long Commentary on the De Anima*

99. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (1984), 6.1, 1026a27–32.

100. *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), Book Lām (Lambda, XII), c. 36, 1593–1594. My translation. Cf. (1962), XII, c. 36, f. 318v G–H, and (1984), 149.

101. “One should hold that it [scil. the material intellect] is a fourth kind of being. For just as sensible being is divided into form and matter, so too intelligible being must be divided into things similar to these two, namely, into something similar to form and into something similar to matter. This is [something] necessarily present in every separate intelligence which understands something else. And if not, then there would

he writes with full awareness of the importance of this for the metaphysical issues: “If it were not for this genus of beings which we have come to know in the science of the soul, we could not understand multiplicity in separate things, to the extent that, unless we know here the nature of the intellect, we could not know that the separate moving powers ought to be intellects” {410}.<sup>102</sup>

Yet, not unlike Aristotle’s own text of Book 1, Averroes marshals few detailed arguments regarding intellect in his Comments in the First Book. Instead, employing the results of his arguments yet to come in Book 3 to interpret Aristotle’s statements in Book 1, Averroes explains his understanding of Aristotle’s own hints on key characteristics of intellect: “This is his opinion concerning the material intellect: it is separate from the body and it is impossible that it understand anything without the imagination. He did not mean by this what appears superficially [to be the case] from this account, that if understanding comes to be only with imagination, then the material intellect will be generable and corruptible, as Alexander thought from [this account]” {18}. And it is only by this paradoxical separation from body while at the same time requiring involvement with imagination, which is a bodily power, that the material intellect can be what “discerns the intentions of all beings” {88}. Distinct from the imagination, which Averroes sometimes calls the imaginative intellect or passible intellect {88}, the material intellect, he asserts, “discerns universal intentions” {90}. The full meaning of these statements on the material intellect in Book 1 becomes evident only in the extended treatments of Book 3.

### *The Senses and Internal Powers of Particular Human Beings*

The distinction between the senses, internal and external, and the intellect is explained at greater length in Book 2, Comments 6off., where Averroes stresses the differences between sense and intellect: “The reason for the difference between sense and intellect in the acquisition of complete actuality lies in the fact that the mover is external in the case of sense and it is internal in the case of intellect. For sense in act is moved only by a motion which is called apprehending and [is dependent] upon sensible particular things which are outside the soul. Intellect, however, is moved to complete actuality by universal things and those are in the soul” {220}. What come from the senses, he goes on to

be no multiplicity {410} in separate forms. It was already explained in First Philosophy that there is no form free of potency without qualification except the First Form which understands nothing outside itself. Its being is its quiddity. Other forms, however, are in some way different in quiddity and being.”

102. This issue is treated at greater length in Taylor (1998a).

explain, are intentions which can be grasped by imagination, while what the intellect has in it are "universals in potency" or what he calls a "universal intention . . . different from an imagined intention." It is by means of these that human beings are able to form concepts when they wish, in contrast to sensation which "needs sensibles which are outside the soul." Sensibles move the soul not in accord with their manner of existence in matter outside the soul but as intentions received by the sense and caused by the external objects {220}. As a potency limited in its objects and range, sense is directed intentional potency and disposition for receiving intentions which are both sensible in potency and intelligible in potency {221}. These intentions apprehended by sense are intentions of individuals. And "that individual intention is what the cogitative power discerns from the imagined form and refines from the things which were conjoined with it from those common and proper sensibles {226}, and it deposits it in the memory. This same [individual intention] is what the imaginative [power] apprehends, but the imaginative [power] apprehends it as conjoined to those sensibles, although its apprehension is more spiritual."

Later Averroes explains that this cogitative power or cogitation, an internal bodily power located in the brain, is "an individual discerning power . . . which discerns the intention of a sensible thing from its imagined image" {415}. It is third in the order of spirituality, with common sense and imagination less spiritual and the power of memory more spiritual than cogitation. Yet while these powers are spiritual insofar as they discern or separate intentions from things of the world, they are not intellectual or rationally discerning since they still concern the intentions of individuals. "Although, therefore, a human being properly has a cogitative power, nevertheless this does not make it that this power is rational and discerning, for [the rational power] discerns universal intentions, not individual ones" {416}. What Averroes calls "the discerning rational power," intellect, cannot be a power in a body since it would require an organ. But such a thing is impossible since the intellect cannot be a power mixed with body and still be intellect which grasps intelligibles in act. In short, the function of the bodily yet spiritual cogitative power is to discern and refine sensible intentions presented by the internal power of imagination by denuding the intentions as much as possible of accretions extraneous to the intention itself. Nevertheless, what it deposits in memory is not an intelligible but rather a denuded individual intention still "material" insofar as it is the intention of an individual particular which is intelligible in potency, not intelligible in act. By the action of the cogitative power and memory, the individual intention, refined as much as possible, is prepared for the activity of a higher and completely immaterial power, the intellect, in what Averroes later describes as a process in which the refined imagined intention "is transferred in

its being from one order into another" {439}—that is, from intelligible in potency to intelligible in act.

From the foregoing it is evident that the most important role among the internal sense powers is reserved for the cogitative power, which received little mention in the *Short Commentary* and the *Middle Commentary*. Regarding "the passible intellect," which "is necessary for conceptualization," in the *Long Commentary* Averroes writes that this term is used by Aristotle to mean "the forms of the imagination insofar as the cogitative power proper to human beings acts upon them. For that power is a kind of reason and its activity is nothing but the placing of the intention of the form imagined in its individuality in memory or the discerning of it from [the individual] in conceptualization and imagination."<sup>103</sup> And it is evident that the intellect which is called material receives the imagined intentions after this discernment" {449}. So important in the epistemological account are these internal powers in the particular human being that Averroes asserts, "without the imaginative power and the cogitative [power] the intellect which is called material understands nothing" {450}. But as these citations indicate, it is in Book 3 that Averroes, while still following Aristotle's text, fully sets forth his final position on the intellect. So the completion of this account of the role of the cogitative power must await a detailed exposition of his new teachings on the separate intellects.

### *The Material Intellect*

In the 68 Comments on the Texts of Aristotle's Book 3, chs. 4–13 of the *De Anima*, Averroes mentions the material intellect some 182 or more times and spells out his teachings in several key sections. As indicated, however, the order of his account is not driven primarily by his own systematic doctrine but rather follows the order of Aristotle's Texts. Still, the doctrine he sets forth is itself a detailed and methodical account of the principles which yield the novel doctrine of intellect expounded in this work. In Comment 5 he sets forth his understanding of the nature of the material intellect in critical dialogue with the views of Alexander, Theophrastus, Themistius, and Ibn Bâjjah as Averroes understands them; in Book 3, Comments 18–20, he expounds his understanding of the grounds for asserting the existence of separate agent and material intellects; and in Comment 36 the natures of understanding and conjoining

103. Since conceptualization properly speaking can take place only at the level of intellect, here *formationem* is used to indicate image formation as an activity of imagination or cogitation working still at the level of particulars rather than a properly intellectual activity. The Arabic is surely *تصوّر* *taṣawwur*, which literally means "image forming." With the addition *بالعقل* *bi-l-'aql* it denotes intellectual conceptualization. Here, however, I translate *formatio* as it is translated elsewhere in the *Long Commentary*.

with separate intellect as such are the primary focus. Throughout Book 3 Averroes' new understanding of the function of cogitation in the process of conceiving and reconceiving knowledge emerges as a fundamental part of his mature teaching.

Following Aristotle, Averroes begins his Third Book with consideration of the nature of human understanding's conceptualizing (تصور *taṣawwur*, *formare per intellectum*) as both similar and dissimilar to sense perception. Each is an apprehensive power of the soul and so is receptive. But unlike sensation, which is "a power in a body," intellect's power of conceptualizing "does not undergo affection equivalent to the affection of the sense, namely, there does not come about for it a change similar to the change which comes about for the sense, but it is only likened to sense in regard to receptivity, because it is not a power in a body" {381}. The reason for this difference lies in the change which takes place in sensation, whereby what is a body or a power in a body is changed in its accidental being as a determinate particular {382}, whereas the intellect "is neither a body nor a power in a body" {383}.<sup>104</sup> Consequently, intellect is not changed by its reception of intelligibles because these are not determinate particulars which are intelligibles in potency but rather intelligibles in act under the very notion of knowledge. And as Anaxagoras held, "it is necessary that it be unmixed so that it may apprehend and receive all things. For if it is mixed, then it will be either a body or a power in a body, and if it is {384} either of these, it will have its own form and this form will impede its reception of another foreign form."

Thus, insofar as conceptualizing comes about in the intellect, the subject in which this takes place must be one which is immaterial and yet receptive. Since knowledge concerns things of the material world, the rational soul is receptive insofar as "the rational soul needs to consider the intentions which are in the imaginative power, just as sense needs to view sensibles" {384}. Yet it must also be active "since it seems that the forms of external things move this power in such a way that the mind (*mens*) abstracts them from matters and makes them first to be intelligibles {385} in act after they were intelligibles in potency." It is for this reason, writes Averroes, that Aristotle found it "necessary to assert that these two differences are in the rational soul, namely, the power of activity and the power of affection" {385}. Averroes is able to conclude that "this substance which is called the material intellect has none of those material forms in its nature" on the basis of two principles derived from these

104. "Determinate particular" reflects the Latin *aliquid hoc*, which corresponds to Aristotle's τὸδε τι at *De Anima*, 402a24, and المشار إليه *al-mushâr ilaihi*, meaning "designated" or "determinate" in the *Middle Commentary* on the *De Anima*. See *Middle Commentary* (2002), 113.14 and 113.22. For a discussion, see Bauloye (1997), 74–76.

considerations. First, this intellect is receptive of the intentions of all worldly material forms without restriction; second, "everything receiving something else must be devoid of the nature of the thing received and its substance must not be the same in species as the substance of the thing received" {385}. In this way he has shown that "this substance which is called the material intellect {386} is neither a body nor a form in a body; it is, therefore, altogether unmixed with matter." It is then a being which is a receptive potency, separate, without a material form, and in itself simple and not changeable as are determinate particulars subject to substantial or accidental change {386}.

Averroes' solution to the key epistemological and metaphysical issues comes in a discussion of considerations central to the doctrine of the material intellect, which he finds prompted by study of the Greek commentators Theophrastus, Themistius, and Alexander, with Ibn Bâjjah's view critically evaluated as well. The three issues are these: (1) If the agent intellect is eternal and the material intellect is also eternal, what then must be the nature of the theoretical intellect in human beings? Must not the product of the agent intellect and the material intellect be eternal if these intellects are eternal? (2) How can the power called the material intellect be one and the same in all human beings at birth and yet individual for each in its final perfected state? (3) How is the material intellect an existing being of a nature essentially consisting in receptivity without being a material form or matter?<sup>105</sup> It is in this context that Averroes forms the set of two philosophical principles required to enable him to assert what he only raised as a question in his *Epistle 1 On Conjunction* as indicated above—namely, the existence of a single, shared material intellect for all human beings: "That part of the soul which is called the material intellect has no nature and being by which it is constituted inasmuch as it is material except the nature of possibility, since it is devoid of all material and intelligible forms. . . . The definition of the material intellect, therefore, is that which is in potency all the intentions of universal material forms and is not any of the beings in act before it understands any of them" {387}. The pure potentiality of the material intellect is distinct from that of prime matter, he continues, because the material intellect is a potency for the apprehensive reception of "all the intentions {388} of the universal material forms." Prime matter, in contrast, is a potency for the actual material reception of sensible forms without apprehension of any kind. Prime matter is receptive of "individual and particular forms," while the material intellect is receptive of universal forms which are intelligibles in act. Forms received into prime matter become determinate particular entities, with those forms existing as principles in substantial composition. The forms of things are then individual entities existing as intelligibles in potency—that is, intel-

105. This is the "question of Theophrastus." See below, pp. lxxx–lxxxi.

ligible only by reference to an external power which might apprehend them, discern their particular intentions, and abstract the intelligible intention to form an intelligible in act. The material intellect, however, which itself "is not a determinate particular nor a body nor a power in a body," is an entity which "must receive forms by a mode of reception other than that by which those matters receive the forms whose contraction by matter is the determination of prime matter in them." According to Aristotle, writes Averroes, the material intellect is a nature "which is other than the nature of matter, other than the nature of form, and other than the nature of the composite" {388}.

From this account Averroes is able to conclude that the material intellect is an entity unlike prime matter because of its apprehensive nature and unlike the apprehensive external and internal powers of the soul because all these are receptive of intentions of determinate particulars. As indicated above, even the more spiritual of the internal senses, cogitation and memory, work with determinate particular intentions and require the abstraction of an intellectual power to "transfer" the intention from the mode of being of a determinate particular to the mode of being of an intelligible in act. Yet since the intelligibles in act which come to exist in the material intellect cannot have the mode of being characteristic of a determinate particular, they cannot be received into a subject which is itself a determinate particular. Were that to happen, they would be contracted in their recipient subject from a mode of being an intelligible in act to that of what is an intelligible in potency only. Thus, the material intellect cannot itself be a determinate particular entity (*aliquid hoc*, *المشار إليه al-mushâr ilaihi*). As such, the material intellect then has a unique mode of existence since, on the one hand, it is required by each human being for conceptualization and intellectual understanding to take place, but, on the other hand, it is unique in its species and not a determinate particular belonging individually to any determinate particular human being. This account provides part of the argument for the assertion of the existence of one separate material intellect contemplated but not argued in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*. It remains for Averroes to explain how there can be one material intellect for all and yet knowing somehow takes place differently in distinct human subjects such as Zayd and 'Amr or Plato and Socrates.

That explanation comes toward the end of Comment 5, where he explains regarding the material intellect that "it is not necessary that the recipient be nothing at all in act but rather that it not be in act something of what it receives" {410}. That is, the material intellect has a nature of its own, consisting in receptivity and receptivity actualized by what is extrinsic to it. Likening the relation of the agent intellect and the material intellect to that of light and the transparent medium, Averroes extends the analogy to the forms of things of the world when he adds,

The relation of the material forms {411} to [the material intellect] is [the same as] the relation of color to the transparent [medium]. For just as light is the actuality of the transparent [medium], so the agent intellect is the actuality of the material [intellect]. Just as the transparent [medium] is not moved by color and does not receive it except when there is light, so too that intellect does not receive the intelligibles which are here except insofar as it is actualized through that [agent] intellect and illuminated by it. Just as light makes color in potency to be in act in such a way that it can move the transparent [medium], so the agent intellect makes the intentions in potency to be intelligible in act in such a way that the material intellect receives them. This, then, is how the material intellect and the agent [intellect] should be understood.

When the two intellects are joined in this fashion, abstraction of the intention intelligible in potency (the intention existing as a determinate particular in the internal senses subsequent to sense perception) takes place, with the result that the acquired intellect (*العقل المستفاد*, *al-'aql al-mustafâd*, *intellectus adeptus*) comes to be in the soul of the human agent who initiated the act of knowing by "our will."<sup>106</sup> This is the theoretical intellect (*العقل النظري*, *al-'aql al-naẓarî*, *intellectus speculativus*), whereby knowledge is, in a way, retained in the individual human being. In virtue of this human beings can be denominated knowers. This is so thanks to an understanding of knowing which Averroes borrows from his understanding of sense perception, his two-subject theory.

In his *Short Commentary* Averroes speaks of two subjects for intelligibles, a subject external to the soul in virtue of which the intelligible is true and another subject in virtue of which the intelligibles exist.<sup>107</sup> In the *Long Commentary* he expounds a slightly modified version of this notion, derived from consideration of sense perception, to account for the duality by which knowing can be said to belong to both the separate material intellect and the particular human knower.

Apprehending by sense is something which is actualized through two subjects, one the subject in virtue of which the sense is true (this is the

106. {390}. Also see {439}, {490}, and {495}. That this comes about by will or "whenever we wish" is also asserted by Themistius. See Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 99; (1973), 179; (1996), 123; (1990), 90.

107. *Short Commentary on the De Anima* at (1985), 116–117, and 124–125 respectively; (1987), 203–204 and 210. Cf. Book 3, n. 59. Also see Blaustein (1984), 63ff. The inspiration for this two-subject analysis is probably Ibn Bâjjah's reflection on the status of intelligibles in perishable particular human beings as spiritual forms and in themselves as intelligible forms. See Ibn Bâjjah, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), 15–16; Spanish, 33–35; (1968), 163–164; (1981), 188.

thing sensed outside the soul) and the other the subject in virtue of which the sense is an existing form (this is the first actuality of the sense organ). Hence, the intelligibles in act must also have two subjects, one the subject in virtue of which they are true, namely the forms which are true images, and the other that in virtue of which the intelligibles are among the beings in the world, and this latter is the material intellect. For there is no difference regarding this between sense and intellect except that the subject of the sense in virtue of which it is true is outside the soul and the subject of the intellect in virtue of which it is true is inside the soul<sup>108</sup> {400}.

Thus, the subject by which they exist is the material intellect, which is the immaterial and separate subject for intelligibles in act following the agent intellect's "illumination," which both transforms intelligibles in potency into intelligibles in act and also makes possible the reception of these by the receptive material intellect, their subject of existence.<sup>109</sup> The subject by which they are true is the particular human being's more spiritual internal sense powers—namely, imagination, cogitation, and memory—which presented the refined image before the agent intellect. "For, just as the subject of vision moving [vision], which is color, moves it only when color is made to exist in act through the presence of light after it was in potency, so too the imagined intentions move the material intellect only when the intelligibles are made to exist in act after they were in potency" {401}.

This theory of two subjects then also has a role to play in the explanation of how it is possible for differences in knowledge between two particular human subjects while there is nevertheless one shared material intellect by which all human beings are knowers. "If the thing understood in me and in you were one in every way, it would happen that when I would know some intelligible you would also know it, and many other impossible things [would also follow]. If we assert it to be many, then it would happen that the thing understood in me and in you would be one in species and two in individual [number]. In this way the thing understood will have a thing understood and so it proceeds into infinity" {411}. What is understood—that is, the intelligible in act—cannot be shared such that when one person knows, any other human being also knows, an impossible consequence given human experience. Like-

108. See Book 3, n. 66.

109. "For to abstract is nothing other than to make imagined intentions intelligible in act after they were [intelligible] in potency. But to understand is nothing other than to receive these intentions. For when we found the same thing, namely, the imagined intentions, is transferred in its being from one order into another, we said that this must be from an agent cause and a recipient cause. The recipient, however, is the material [intellect] and the agent is [the intellect] which brings [this] about" {439}.

wise, what is understood cannot be many such that the intelligible in act is existing multiple times in multiple particular human beings, since the Third Man Argument would require the assertion of a third intelligible in act over those in particular human beings, and so forth into infinity. Knowing, then, is not something generated and created "in the student, in the way in which one fire generates another {412} fire similar to it in species." This impossibility together with the fact that "what is known is the same in the teacher and the student . . . caused Plato to believe that learning is recollection" {412}. Yet that cannot be the case simply because knowing is the grasp of things of the world intelligible in potency under the power of intellect whereby they come to exist as intelligible in act. On the basis of these considerations, Averroes concludes, "Since, then, we asserted that the intelligible thing which is in me and in you is many in subject insofar as it is true, namely, the forms of the imagination, and one in the subject in virtue of which it is an existing intellect (namely, the material [intellect]), those questions are completely resolved" {412}.

Hence, the intelligible can be said to belong to each individual human being only insofar as that human being is the subject of the truth of the intelligible—that is, only insofar as that human being had formed in imagination, cogitation, and memory the denuded intention which is that human being's contribution to the process of knowing taking place at the transcendent level of the separate material and agent intellects. Knowledge, then, belongs to individuals in virtue of their causal contribution to its formation in the separate intellects, where that intelligible in act comes to exist in a subject which is the material intellect itself. Without that causal link, the particular human being does not have knowledge and is not linked with the material intellect. In this way, for example, one person who in the past has seen and studied giraffes with individual effort is able to make his knowledge actual again by reconnecting with the material intellect when he encounters this remarkable animal in the jungle. But another person, who has no image in memory and has not linked with the material intellect to apprehend the intelligible in act of the giraffe, cannot identify this animal correctly.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, as indicated above, this intelligible in act is not literally and actually present with the individual human soul as its subject since that subject is a particularizing power in a body. Rather, it must exist in the material intellect, which, as unique and itself a distinct and complete species (as is each of the separate intellects), is not a determinate particular (*aliquid hoc*, *المشار إليه al-mushâr ilaihi*). Its nature in this way is such that it can receive and contain intelligibles

110. As indicated above at p. x, at *Middle Commentary* (2002), 123 (314), Averroes writes that "one who does not sense a genus of sensible objects cannot know it, nor can an intelligible [of the genus] ever reach him."



in act without particularizing them, while at the same time being itself a thesaurus of actualized intelligibles to which all human beings who have provided images for their abstraction may refer. This then provides the second of the two principles required for the doctrine of the separate material intellect.

With this doctrine, Averroes has provided the grounds for the assertion of the material intellect as required by the metaphysics of the nature of intelligibles and their subjects. With reasons and arguments not mentioned in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*, where he could only raise the question of the possibility of conceiving the material intellect to be unique, separate, and shared, here Averroes has supplied the needed principles and accounts for setting forth his new understanding of the material intellect. And while he saw this to be in accord with the relevant philosophical principles and also as the only sound account of Aristotle, his teaching on the material intellect was fully understood by Averroes to be new in the tradition: "One should hold that it is a fourth kind of being" [409].<sup>111</sup> That is, it is neither matter nor form nor a composite of these, but rather a unique entity which the philosophical principles and issues led Averroes to assert. It is an intellect unique in its species with the nature of receptivity.<sup>112</sup>

Averroes did not take his understanding of the unique and shared material intellect from Themistius, but in forming his thought on it, he did take several principles from Themistius in his critical engagement with the *Paraphrase of the De Anima* in the course of his third reading of that work while composing the *Long Commentary*. The notion of the unity of science in a single set of intelligibles in act, key in enabling Averroes' move to the assertion of a unique material intellect as explained above, was adopted in rejection of the doctrine of the *Middle Commentary*, where a plurality of individual material intellects, each with its own set of intelligibles in act, is set forth. The source of the new

111. The complexity of the issues at stake and the difficulty of their reconciliation were daunting to Averroes, but he was intent on working toward their resolution to the extent of his ability. "Since there are all those things [which can be raised regarding the material intellect], for this reason it seemed [best] to me to write what seemed to me to be the case on this topic. If what appears to me is not complete, it will be a start for a complete account. So I ask my brothers seeing this exposition to write down their doubts and perhaps in that way what is true regarding this will be found out, if I have not yet found [it]. If I have found [it], as I suppose, then it will be clarified through those questions. For truth, as Aristotle says, is fitting and gives testimony to itself in every way" [399].

112. See pp. lviii–lix. In his late *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander*, Averroes asserts that "the material intellect is one power shared by individual souls" and that the theoretical intelligibles are "in essence ungenerable and incorruptible." *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander* (2001), 29. See Book 3 [406–408] and the notes there.

teaching is Themistius. This Greek thinker is also a foundational source for Averroes' difficult doctrine that the agent intellect is not only agent or efficient cause in the generation of intelligibles, but also "in" the soul as "form for us." However, while Themistius is a source for Averroes, his teachings are not taken uncritically but rather serve as points of philosophical inspiration which Averroes crafts to fit coherently with other principles of his own Aristotelian account.

Quite different from the teachings of the *Long Commentary*, Themistius' *Paraphrase of the De Anima* sets forth the view that a potential intellect and an actual intellect are found in each individual human soul. According to Themistius, the actuality of these is founded in a relationship to the unique productive intellect: "There is no need to be puzzled if we who are combined from the potential and the actual [intellects] are referred back to one productive intellect, and that what it is to be each of us is derived from that single [intellect]. Where otherwise do the notions that are shared (*koinai ennoiai*) come from? Where is the untaught and identical understanding of the primary definitions and primary axioms derived from? For we would not understand one another unless there were a single intellect that we all shared."<sup>113</sup> The productive intellect "has all the forms all together and presents all of them to itself at the same time,"<sup>114</sup> while individual intellects are characterized as "combined from the potential intellect and actual [intellects]."<sup>115</sup> Identifying the individual human intellect more with the actual intellect insofar as this is the source of actuality, Themistius asserts that the actual intellect itself has as its source the transcendent productive intellect, which "alone is form in a precise sense, and indeed this is 'form of forms,'" such that "we are the productive intellect" properly speak-

113. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 103.36–104.3; (1973), 188–189; (1990), 105; (1996), 129. Note that for Themistius this "productive intellect" is not the most transcendent entity or God, but rather an intellect at a lower level of reality and involved with human understanding. The corresponding Arabic of the *Paraphrase* has, "There need be no wonder that we all are as a group composites of what is in potency and of what is in act. All of us whose existence is by virtue of this one are referred back to a one which is the agent intellect (العقل الفعال *al-'aql al-fa'âl*). For if not this, then whence is it that we possess known sciences in a shared way? And whence is it that the understanding of the primary definitions and primary propositions is alike [for us all] without learning? For it is right that, if we do not have one intellect in which we all share, then we also do not have understanding of one another."

114. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 100.9–10; (1973), 181; (1990), 93; (1996), 124.

115. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 100.16–20; (1973), 182; (1990), 93–94; (1996), 124–125.

ing since it is the source of our actuality.<sup>116</sup> In this account each human being has a potential intellect, and an illuminating and abstracting actual intellect which is responsible for the formation of intelligibles from a storehouse of experience in the potential intellect, which contains "the imprints from perception and imagination through the agency of memory."<sup>117</sup> However, this abstracting takes place only thanks to the individual actual intellect's sharing of the power of the transcendent productive intellect: "The intellect that illuminates (*ellampôn*) in a primary sense is one, while those that are illuminated (*ellampomenoi*) and that illuminate (*ellampontes*) are, just like light, more than one."<sup>118</sup> When this abstraction on the part of the actual intellect takes place, the productive intellect "encounters it and takes over" it,<sup>119</sup> such that the productive intellect is "not outside" but "settles into the whole of the potential intellect," as if "to pervade it totally," and "becomes one with it."<sup>120</sup> In this way, as "form of forms," the productive intellect comes to act as an intrinsic formal cause of the potential intellect through the individual's actual intellect, although the productive intellect retains its transcendent existence. Only by this sort of participation of the power of the productive intellect, which comes to be intrinsic to the human intellect, does abstraction of intelligibles in act from the storehouse of images in the potential intellect take place for Themistius.

The productive intellect, then, contains and thinks all the transcendent forms, something Themistius confirms with the rhetorical question, "From what source will the potential intellect also come to think all objects, if the intellect that advances it to activity does not think all objects prior to it?"<sup>121</sup>

116. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 100.31–32 and 100.35–101.1; (1973), 182–183; (1990), 95; (1996), 125.

117. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 99.6–8; (1973), 179.5–6; (1990), 89; (1996), 123. For the Arabic Lyons suggests ذخيرة *dhakhîrah* (storehouse) in place of كثرة *kathrah* (multitude), found in the sole extant Arabic manuscript.

118. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 103.33–34; (1973), 188.13–14; (1990), 104; (1996), 128–129.

119. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 99.8–10; (1973), 179.6–7; (1990), 89–90; (1996), 123.

120. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 99.13–18; (1973), 179.6–7; (1990), 90; (1996), 123.

121. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 103.30–32; (1973), 188.11–13; (1990), 104; (1996), 128. The extant Arabic text has: "Whence does the intellect in potency come to know all things if what brings it to act is *first* knowing all things?" Lyons (1973) reads *أول* *awwalan* (first), while the original translation likely had *لا* *lâ* (not)—that is, "Whence does the intellect in potency come to know all things if what brings it to act is *not* knowing all things?"

Abstraction by the individual human being's actual intellect takes place only under the intrinsic presence of the productive intellect, which already itself contains the intelligible forms. This is something which may function as guaranteeing that abstraction of intelligibles by the individual actual intellect matches with the real transcendent intelligible forms.<sup>122</sup>

In the account of Themistius, then, Averroes finds the needed principle asserting that there must be but one thesaurus of intelligibles in act for the unity of intellectual understanding and scientific discourse. Where Themistius wrote, "For we would not understand one another unless there were a single intellect that we all shared," Averroes found in the Arabic, "For it is right that, if we do not have one intellect in which we all share, then we also do not have understanding of one another." In adopting this conception of intelligibles in act, Averroes responded to the question raised in *Epistle 1 On Conjunction* which had to be resolved before the material intellect could be asserted as unique and shared by all human beings.

In the *Long Commentary*, however, Averroes does not follow Themistius in holding that the agent intellect (corresponding to productive intellect in Themistius) precontains the intelligibles in act. Rather, Averroes insists that the human attainment of intelligibles in act comes about only through external and internal powers of individual human souls existing in bodies. As indicated above, if images and intentions from personal worldly experience are not present in the soul's powers, an individual human being has no means of attaining intelligibles in act of things of the world. For human beings all intellectual understanding of the world necessarily comes through or with sense perception. Nevertheless, while rejecting the conception of the agent intellect as containing exemplar intelligibles in act, Averroes embraces and makes his own the Themistian notion that the agent intellect must necessarily be understood to penetrate the human soul so profoundly in the activity of intellectual understanding as to be "in" the soul as "form for us"—that is, as its formal cause in a fashion discussed at length below.<sup>123</sup>

Thus, Averroes answers the three key questions motivating this portion of his detailed study as follows. (1) The agent intellect and the material intellect are eternal substances and are related to the perishable theoretical intellect as first and final actualities, functioning intrinsic to the human intellectual soul yet existing separately. The intelligibles in act shared in the perishable theoretical intellect are themselves eternal when in the material intellect as their subject; as shared by the individual human being, they are perishable with the perishable nature of their human subject. (2) This material intellect can be

122. Cf. the remarks of Todd at Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1990), 104, n. 119.

123. See below pp. lxvii–lxxv.



shared by all human beings insofar as the disposition for understanding as first actuality is common to the human species. Nevertheless, intellectual understanding is individual for each human being since it is linked to an individual's personal will and effort, as evidenced in the formation of denuded particular intentions by the individual's cogitative power or imaginative power generally so called. These are presented to the separate intellects in the process of abstraction, a process which remains rooted in the experiences and efforts of the individual for its content. The final perfected state of knowing is in this way achieved individually when the knower is the subject on which the truth of the intelligible rests and that individual is linked to the material intellect, which is the subject for the intelligible's existence in act. (3) The coherence of this doctrine requires that the material intellect be an immaterial receptive substance and an intellect insofar as it is receptive of intelligibles in act and functions as a thesaurus of intelligibles in act, which is the single, distinct set of referents or scientific universals in thought and speech. As such, it is a unique "fourth kind of being" (409), something which is both receptive and at the same time an immaterial intellect and, in a way, eternally in act.

*Two Separate and Distinct Intellectual Substances:  
Material Intellect and Agent Intellect*

The relationship of this material intellect and the agent intellect is taken up in some detail in Book 3, Comments 18–20. Working from a faulty Text of *De Anima*, 430a14–17, where Aristotle speaks of two intellects while Averroes' Arabic Text of the *De Anima* mentions three, Averroes skillfully makes sense of the passage by reading it as a discussion of the material intellect, agent intellect, and the intellect in a positive disposition (العقل بالملكة *al'aql bi-l-malakah*, *intellectus in habitu*). This last is the intellect insofar as it is in a particular human being subsequent to the formation of an intelligible in act in the material intellect since it concerns "the generated intelligible." All three of these are distinct in substance for Averroes, who holds the agent intellect and material intellect to be two intellectual substances and the intellect in a positive disposition to be a power of the particular human being.<sup>124</sup> The reasoning, he writes, "which forced us to suppose the agent intellect" involves the analogy with sight and light. "For just as sight is not moved by colors except when they are in act, which is not realized unless light is present since it is what draws them

124. "Two of these three are eternal, namely, the agent and the recipient; the third is generable and corruptible in one way, eternal in another way" (406). "And because the intellect which is in a positive disposition is one of the generable beings, it is necessary that, when it will have come to the end in generation, it come to the end in its activity" (489).

from potency into act, so too the imagined intentions do not move the material intellect except when the intelligibles are in act, because it is not actualized by these unless something else is present, namely, the intellect in act" (439). In this way the contribution of the higher internal human powers of imagination, cogitation, and memory, based on sense perception, provides the content of knowing originally as intelligibles in potency to be made into intelligibles in act by the agent intellect and received by the material intellect. Expressly rejecting the notion that "the intelligibles" are able to "enter into the material intellect from the agent intellect, without the material intellect needing to behold sensible forms" (438), he concludes, "Hence, in view of our having asserted that the relation of the imagined intentions (439) to the material intellect is just as the relation of the sensibles to the senses (as Aristotle will say later), it is necessary to suppose that there is another mover which makes [the intentions] move the material intellect in act (and this is nothing but to make [the intentions] intelligible in act by separating them from matter)." This, he writes, "forces the assertion of an agent intellect different from the material intellect and different from the forms of things which the material intellect apprehends" (439). "It was necessary to ascribe these two activities to the soul in us, namely, to receive the intelligible and to make it, although the agent and the recipient are eternal substances, on account of the fact that these two activities are reduced to our will, namely, to abstract intelligibles and to understand them" (439).

The nature of the agent intellect in itself has no receptivity of the sort found in the material intellect and does not have understanding of worldly forms: "the agent intelligence understands nothing of the things which are here" (441). Still, like all entities other than the First Cause, it has a different sort of receptivity insofar as its being has within it a reference to something outside itself, scil. the First Cause, which is the final cause of all and equivocally also the formal and efficient cause of all.<sup>125</sup> While it is an eternal entity posited to

125. See n. 101 above and also see Taylor (1998a), nn. 30, 31, and 48. The First Cause is also "the First Knower, who understands nothing outside Himself" (420). In his *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Averroes writes: "The difference between the First's understanding of Itself and the understanding of themselves which the rest of the intellects have is that the First Intellect understands Itself as existing through Itself, not as what is related to a cause, while the rest of the intellects understand themselves as being related to their cause so that plurality enters into these in this way. For it is not necessary that they all be in one grade of simplicity since they are not in a single grade in relation to the First Principle and none of them exists simply in the sense in which the First is simple, because the First is considered to exist by Itself, while they are in related existence (في الوجود المضاف *fi-l-wujūd al-mudāf*)." *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (1930), 204. My translation. Cf. *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (1969), 122. Also see Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* (1952), 1697, ll. 6–9; (1962), c. 51, 335v1, where he explains, "The

account for human intellectual abstraction and its operation is an intellectual one which thereby might be called understanding, properly speaking the agent intellect functions as what "transfers" intelligibles in potency to the realm of the intellect, where they are intelligibles in act in the material intellect. "After he had recounted these things which it has in common with the material intellect, he gave the disposition proper to the agent intellect. He said: **and in its substance it is activity**, that is, there is in it no potency {441} for something, as there is in the recipient intellect potency for receiving forms. For the agent intelligence understands nothing of the things which are here. It was necessary that the agent intelligence be separate, unmixed and impassible, insofar as it is what makes all forms intelligible."<sup>126</sup> However, Averroes' description of these two intellects in Book 3, Comment 20, has led some to consider that these are in themselves just one intellectual substance.<sup>127</sup> There he writes, "Generally, when someone will consider the material intellect with the agent intellect, {451} they will appear to be two in a way and one in another way. For they are two in virtue of the diversity of their activity, for the activity of the agent intellect is to generate while that of the former is to be informed. They are one, however, because the material intellect is actualized through the agent [intellect] and understands it. In this way we say that two powers appear in the intellect conjoined with us, of which one is active and the other of the genus of passive powers." His meaning here is that these distinct substances can be regarded

intellect of that which thinks any thing whatever follows that thing which it thinks, that is, it is always below it in rank; it is a primary notion of ours that the divine intellect must be in the highest degree of excellence and perfection." Ibid. (1984), 193. In the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* he explains as follows: "It is not necessary that the existence of the intellect and the intelligible in separate intellects as one and the same be such that they are all equal in simplicity. For [the philosophers] hold that in this notion the intellects surpass [one another] to greater or lesser degrees and that this [simplicity] exists in reality only in the First Intellect. The reason for this is that the essence of the First Intellect is subsistent per se, while the rest of the intellects understand by their essences that they subsist through [the First Intellect]." *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (1930), 204. My translation. Cf. ibid. (1969), 123.

126. Cf. "This is one of these things by which this intellect is distinguished from the agent intellect, namely, that in this intellect each is found, while in the agent [intellect] only act [is found], not potency. For this reason Aristotle rightly called that intellect *material*, not because it is mixed and has matter, as Alexander held" {463}.

127. For example, this was the view of Alfred L. Ivry in Ivry (1991), 693. However, in Ivry (1999), 210–211, Ivry has come to understand the two intellects to be distinct substances in the *Long Commentary*. My understanding of Averroes is that these are two distinct intellectual substances existing in separation from matter, in accord with the view of Davidson (1992), 292–293, 332–333.

as one insofar as the actuality of the agent intellect takes place in the recipient material intellect, following the Aristotelian notion that the actuality of the agent and that of the patient are one but under two descriptions.<sup>128</sup> In this context, however, this does not entail that they are literally one substance. Rather, in light of the foregoing, it is evident that the argument of Averroes required two distinct substances and that he held to this view.

### *The Cogitative Power and Conjoining with Separate Intellect*

With the establishment of the natures of the material intellect and the agent intellect, it remains to return to a consideration of the cogitative power and to recount the more robust explanation of individual human thinking and the nature and role of the higher internal senses in Averroes' new doctrine of intellectual understanding in the *Long Commentary*. The initial account of the cogitative power, "a particular material power" {476}, given above, stresses its role in the distillation of denuded particular intentions from imagination {415} and the placement of purified intentions of particulars in memory. In this way the particular human soul's cogitative power is responsible for the processing of the particular intentions then presented to the rational power properly so called—namely, the material intellect and the agent intellect in their combined activity, which "discerns universal intentions" {416} or intelligibles in act. When that activity takes place, a human being is in the state called "acquired intellect" since it is involved in the immediate activity of knowing. This acquisition of intelligibles results in the actualization of the human soul as "intellect in a positive disposition" of knowing. In reference to the content of knowledge realized in the material intellect thanks to the contribution of the cogitative power and the intellectual actualizing of the intelligibles in potency by the agent intellect, the term "theoretical intellect" is used to denote the content of knowing now present to the particular human knower.

This activity belonging to particular human beings and called knowing can also be considered as a form of joining, conjoining, or uniting with the agent intellect: "when the theoretical intelligibles are united with us through forms of the imagination and the agent intellect is united with the theoretical intelligibles (for that which apprehends [theoretical intelligibles] is the same, namely, the material intellect), it is necessary that the agent intellect be united with us through the conjoining of the theoretical intelligibles" {500}. However, this conjoining is not merely the generation of intelligibles by the

128. "There is nothing to prevent two things from having one and the same actualization (not the same in being, but related as the potential to the actual)." Aristotle, *Physics* (1984), 3.3, 202b9–10.

agent intellect in some particular human subject as "a cause acting upon us only," as al-Fârâbî is alleged to have taught in his lost *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* {485}. Rather, it must involve a relation of the human subject to the agent intellect, described analogically as that of matter to form.

It is also evident that, when we assert that the material intellect is generable and corruptible, we will then find no way in which the agent intellect will be united with the intellect which is in a positive disposition by a uniting proper to it, namely, with a uniting similar to the conjoining of forms with matters.

When that conjoining has not been asserted, there will be no difference between relating it to a human being and relating it to all beings except in virtue of the diversity of its activity in them. In this way its relation to a human being will be only the relation of the agent to the human being, not a relation of form, and the question of al-Fârâbî which he voiced in his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* arises. For assurance of the possibility of the conjoining of the intellect with us lies in explaining that its relation to a human being is a relation of form and agent, not a relation of agent alone. {502}

The appropriate sort of conjoining must be such that the agent intellect is not merely an extrinsic generating cause bringing about intelligibles in act in the human subject for the reason cited above—namely, because the metaphysics of the issues as analyzed by Averroes precludes the particular human subject from receiving the intelligibles in act as such without particularizing them. Further, were the agent intellect only extrinsic, the intellectual or rational nature would not be intrinsic or *per se* but rather seemingly *per aliud* and *per accidens*. Averroes does not explicitly cite these reasons, but they follow from principles adopted earlier in this work. For Averroes, to describe the conjoining suitably requires that we be conjoined to the agent intellect in an intrinsic way, having it as "form for us" and "our final form."<sup>129</sup>

In a composite material entity, the conjoining of matter to form is such that the potentiality intrinsic to the matter is brought to actuality by the form in a genuine hylemorphism of a single actual being, not such that matter and form remain two distinct things in the material entity. Rather, these two are principles of the being of one thing, one entity. Similarly, the relation of the material intellect to the agent intellect is such that the agent intellect is form or formal cause for the material intellect, although the two remain distinct sub-

129. {445}, {486}, {490}. This notion is derived from Alexander of Aphrodisias as Averroes understood him. See below, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiii and lxxxvi. For a detailed discussion, see Taylor (2005).

stances even though the agent intellect is "in" the material intellect. "When he said: **And when it is separate, it is only what it is**, not mortal, he means the agent intellect insofar as it is form for the material intellect, and this is the theoretical intellect according to him. That question will concern the agent intellect insofar as it is in contact with the material intellect (this is the theoretical intellect)" {445}. The result of this "composition" or presence of the agent intellect "in" the material intellect is manifold: it brings about the actualization of intelligibles in potency in the material intellect as intelligibles in act through the actuality of the agent intellect, and it brings about the acquired intellect and the consequent theoretical intellect in the intellect in a positive disposition in the human subject, as explained above.

When the theoretical intelligibles are united with us through forms of the imagination and the agent intellect is united with the theoretical intelligibles (for that which apprehends [theoretical intelligibles] is the same, namely, the material intellect), it is necessary that the agent intellect be united with us through the conjoining of the theoretical intelligibles. It is evident [then] that, when all the theoretical intelligibles exist in us in potency, it will be united with us in potency. When all the theoretical intelligibles exist in us in act, it will then be united with us in act. And when certain [theoretical intelligibles] exist in potency and certain in act, then it will be united in one part and not in another. Then we are said to be moved to conjoining. {500}

What is more, it is also "form for us" because we are "able to generate intelligibles when we wish" {499}. And this follows, "For, because that in virtue of which something carries out its proper activity is the form, while we carry out {500} our proper activity in virtue of the agent intellect, it is necessary that the agent intellect be form in us."

The analogy of matter and form, however, has its limit, which must be noted. The agent intellect supplies the "light" by which the intelligibles in potency are affected so as to give rise to the intelligibles in act which are received into the material intellect. However, as already stated, unlike form in the material composite, the agent intellect does not provide from itself the quidditative content of the understood intelligible.<sup>130</sup> Rather, that content comes from the world by way of the senses and internal powers of the particular person.

Now he gives the way on the basis of which it was necessary to assert the agent intelligence to be in the soul. For we cannot say that the relation of

130. What the agent intellect brings about must be sound abstractions of natural intelligibles because "It is impossible for false intelligibles to have conjoining, since they are not something occurring naturally" {502}. Cf. Black (1997).

the agent intellect in the soul to the generated intelligible is just as the relation of the artistry to the art's product in every way. For art imposes the form on the whole matter without it being the case that there was something of the intention of the form existing in the matter before the artistry has made it. It is not so in the case of the intellect, for if it were so in the case of the intellect, then a human being would not need sense or imagination for apprehending intelligibles. Rather, the intelligibles would enter into the material intellect from the agent intellect, without the material intellect needing to behold sensible forms. And neither can we even say that the imagined intentions are solely what move the material intellect and draw it out from potency into act. {438}

Sensation and consequent intentions in the imagination alone do not give rise to intelligibles in act. Agent intellect alone does not generate the content of intelligibles in act since in that case the apprehensive powers of sensation and imagination would be superfluous. The relationship of the material intellect, and thereby the theoretical intellect in a particular human knower, to the agent intellect, then, is appropriately described as a relationship in which the agent intellect is "form for us" as shared by us in the very act of intellectual abstraction. "When he said: **And when it is separate, it is what it is alone**, not mortal, he means when that intellect has been united to us and in virtue of it we understand other beings insofar as it is form for us, then this alone of the intellect's parts is not mortal. Next he said: **We do not remember**, etc. This is a question concerning the agent intellect insofar as it is united to us and in virtue of it we understand" {444}. And this conjoining comes about consequent to the voluntary efforts of particular human beings seeking intellectual understanding. Nevertheless, the cause of understanding is conjoining, not the reverse {501}. This conjoining is a means to intellectual understanding of the world for Averroes; intellectual understanding of the world is not a means to some sort of higher state of conjoining, as is the case for Ibn Bājja.<sup>131</sup>

This well-developed notion of agent intellect as an intrinsic formal cause that comes to be active in the soul of human beings in the course of intellectual understanding by conjoining is remarkably similar to the account of the agent intellect Averroes read in the *Paraphrase of the De Anima* by Themistius. Though different in ways mentioned above, the teachings of Themistius and Averroes coincide in the very special way that the productive intellect/agent intellect comes to be present formally and actively in the human process of forming intelligibles in act out of the imagination's intentions constituted from sense perception. For Themistius that abstraction could not take place without the participation of the productive intellect in the very activity of the indi-

vidual actual intellect. Similarly, for Averroes the transference of intentions from the level of images potentially intelligible to the level of intelligibles in act can take place only insofar as the agent intellect comes to be "in" the soul and "form for us"—that is, only insofar as it is formally intrinsic to the individual human soul, providing the intellectual power for abstraction and the formation of intelligibles in act in the material intellect. For both Themistius and Averroes it is we who act when we wish or by will in the apprehension of intelligibles in act but only insofar as the power of the productive intellect/agent intellect is formally present and active in us, drawing from forms in the imagination the content of the intelligibles in act.<sup>132</sup> This sort of participation or sharing in the power of the agent intellect is an essential part of Averroes' noetic doctrine which has gone unrecognized, perhaps due to the attention drawn to his novel doctrine of the material intellect.

The agent intellect, according to Averroes, is "form for us" also as "our final form" {490} "in the end" {499}. "In the beginning it is not conjoined with us" {450} since human beings are at that stage in "the first actuality of the intellect," which "is not a power in a body" {381}. That first actuality for knowing is "the disposition for intelligibles which is in the imaginative power" {405} together with "the material intellect in its first conjoining with us, namely, [in] the conjoining which is through nature" {450} at birth. The second or final actuality is the perfection of the potentiality for intellectual understanding in particular human beings, and its realization in us is the culmination of our fulfillment as rational beings. As intrinsic formal cause coming to the soul from outside by a sort of participation, the agent intellect is not separate from us when we are in the activity of knowing for "it is necessary that a human being understand all the intelligibles through the intellect proper to him and that he carry out the activity proper to him in regard to all beings, just as he understands by his proper intellection all the beings through the intellect which is in a positive disposition, when it has been conjoined with forms of the imagination" {500}. This development of intellect in human beings is natural but only realized in act if the innate potentiality for its actualization by way of the separate intellects in intellectual understanding is pursued by the particular human being. This is because "the material intellect is not united with us per se and initially but is united with us only in virtue of its uniting with the forms of the imagination" {486}. Thus, this "intellect proper to" a human being {500} is constituted in understanding by way of the internal powers of imagination, cogitation, and memory {476}, known collectively as "the possible intellect."

132. See Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 91.20–21; (1996), 115; and (1899), 99.22–23; (1973), 180.5; (1990), 91; (1996), 123. For Averroes, see {439}.

131. See above, p. xxvi, and below, p. xci.

This is confirmed by consideration of the use of intellect in the context of identifying and classifying particulars of experience. When a soldier sees a distant fire as a signal, he "puts the starting point of his consideration of possible things in present things which he sees" {474-475}. That is, we begin with consideration of experience and are able to understand present things and experiences in terms of prior intellectual understanding. In this way a human being manifests the presence of knowledge—that is, manifests the ability of the intellect in a positive disposition to reestablish its contact with the material intellect and thereby to understand a present particular in terms of the intelligible in act. This is simply understanding it *qua* instance of a universal notion. One power at work in this action is the cogitative power, which "draws aid for itself from the informative and the memorative [powers]." It forms "on the basis of the images of things something which it never sensed, in the same disposition according to which it would exist if it had sensed it, by means of assent and conceptualization. Then the intellect will judge those images with a universal judgment" {476}. In this mixed action involving particulars and universals, it is the particular human being who voluntarily initiates by will the action of intellect used in judgment involving reference to intelligibles in act as universals. And it is the cogitative power which moves the will insofar as desire prompted by cogitation is properly speaking will (إرادة *irādah voluntas*), while desire initiated in the absence of cogitation is appetite {519}. In this sense, then, human agency in the original attainment of knowledge and also in the use of already attained knowledge for understanding particulars of experience belongs primarily to the cogitative power or to the ensemble of the imagination, cogitation, and memory, which together can be generally called the imaginative power.<sup>133</sup> To this extent, then, will has to be conceived as being a particular bodily power, as is the cogitative power, and not a power of intellect per se, since the cogitative power is not a power of intellect per se. As a consequence, Averroes' account of the soul in the *Long Commentary* has no provision for the continued existence after death of the individual human agent responsible for moral activity.<sup>134</sup>

The foregoing explains, regarding the material intellect (together with our own particular intellects), "how it understands what has long existed with a

133. "The intellect existing in us has two activities insofar as it is ascribed to us, one of the genus of affection, namely, understanding, and the other of the genus of activity, namely, to extract forms and denude them of matters, which is nothing but making them intelligible in act after they were such in potency. [Hence] it is evident that, after we have possessed the intellect which is in a positive disposition, it is in our will to understand any intelligible we wish and to extract any form we wish" {495}.

134. See Taylor (1998b). Regarding this issue and the attack upon Averroes by Aquinas over the will, see Taylor (2000a) and (1999b).

new intellection" and "why we are not conjoined with this intellect in the beginning but rather in the end" {501}. In order for a particular person to come to have knowledge, it is required for that person to supply intentions intelligible in potency to the separate rational power (agent intellect and material intellect) with personal effort by the directing cogitative power. This is nothing more than to undertake voluntarily the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Such a thing is possible for human beings because of a natural affiliation of the human soul with the separate material intellect and agent intellect which makes possible the fulfillment of the end of human beings consequent upon their natures as rational beings. This is affirmed by Averroes in his *Commentary on Plato's Republic* (perhaps written around 1195), where he writes, "The purpose of man, inasmuch as he is a natural being, is that he ascend to . . . the intelligibles of the theoretical sciences."<sup>135</sup> There he also writes, "This [intellectual understanding of the theoretical sciences] is man's ultimate perfection and ultimate happiness."<sup>136</sup> The end of human beings is just this realization of knowledge, with the agent intellect as the final perfective form, something toward which the human species is naturally directed but something which is attained individually, not collectively.<sup>137</sup>

This attainment of the end of human beings is for Averroes an epistemological account of human intellectual perfection and not a religiously based experience of the divine. Conjoining (اتصال *ittiṣāl continuatio*) with separate intellect is neither some mystical moment nor a non-intellectual experiential stage in human fulfillment. Rather, it is the grasping of intelligibles in act, knowing, and the philosophical understanding consequent upon that which is the end of human beings, not conjoining as such. As indicated above, conjoining with separate intellect is better characterized as the means to the attainment of the true end of human beings—namely, the fulfillment of knowledge. The pursuit of this goal, particularly in its metaphysical investigation of the nature of being, constitutes the Shari'ah, religious law or set of religious duties, incumbent on philosophers:

The *Shari'ah* specific to the philosophers (الحكماء *al-hukamā'*) is the investigation of all beings, since the Creator is not worshipped by a worship more noble than the knowledge of those things that He produced which

135. *On Plato's Republic* (1974), 88.

136. *On Plato's Republic* (1974), 86. My addition.

137. In *Epistle 1 On Conjunction* Averroes mentions that the fact that some human beings are unable to have higher contemplation of intelligibles does not mean that it is not something possible for others. Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 218. That is, it is a perfection characteristic of the human species as its end but not shared by all human beings in its ultimate perfection or actuality. Cf. Taylor (2007), 50.

lead to the knowledge in truth of His essence—may He be exalted! That [investigation philosophers undertake] is the most noble of the works belonging to Him and the most favored of them that we do in God's presence. How great is it that one perform this service which is the most noble of services and one take it on with this compliant obedience which is the most sublime of obediences!<sup>138</sup>

### Averroes' Major Philosophical Resources for the *Long Commentary*

#### Aristotle's *De Anima*

Averroes' *Long Commentary on the De Anima* is a continuation of the Greek commentary tradition and makes extensive use of the work of Alexander and Themistius, as well as that of his Andalusian predecessor, Ibn Bâjjah. Al-Fârâbî's work on intellect also plays an important role in Averroes' reflections even if, as with his other sources just mentioned, he rejects its apparent conclusions. And while there is little mention of Avicenna, Averroes was well aware of the approach to intellect and soul taken by his important predecessor. Still, first and foremost, Averroes was engaged with the text of Aristotle's *De Anima*.

In composing his *Long Commentary*, Averroes made use of two different translations of the *De Anima*. He quotes his alternate or secondary translation some ten times and at various other times seems to consult it without citation.<sup>139</sup> This translation, which is the sole complete medieval Arabic translation extant today, has been edited by 'Abdurrahman Badawi, who, following the manuscript attribution, incorrectly identified this as the reported second, improved and complete, translation by Ishâq Ibn Hunayn.<sup>140</sup> This anonymous Arabic translation, less accurate and precise, is likely of an era earlier than the Text quoted in its entirety in the *Long Commentary*.<sup>141</sup> In the notes to the present English translation the corresponding Arabic text from the edition by Badawi is quoted with English translation where substantive difference between the Latin and Arabic is noted.

The primary translation found complete in the Latin Text of the *Long Com-*

138. *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), 10.11–16. This text was not available in the Latin translation.

139. See [46], [86], [218], [284–285], [452], [469], [480], [514–515], [519], and [526].

140. Aristotle, *De Anima* (1954), (16). Also see Arnzen (1998), 690–707. For the *status questionis* regarding the translations of the *De Anima* into Syriac and Arabic, see Elamrani-Jamal (2003).

141. Frank (1958–1959) established that this was not the work of Ishâq Ibn Hunayn. Also see Gätje (1971), 20–44, esp. 42–44, where he suggests the translator may be the Christian Ibn Nâ'ima.

mentary is not extant in Arabic, though it does bear some relation to quotations by Avicenna in his surviving marginal notes on the *De Anima* published by Badawi.<sup>142</sup> However, in addition to the Latin, this text of the *De Anima* has also survived in Hebrew translation attributed to Zerahyah ben Isaac ben Shealtiet Hen (fl. late thirteenth century), recently edited by Gerrit Bos, who established the Hebrew and Latin to be ultimately from the same Arabic translation. The precise provenance of this lost Arabic translation of the *De Anima* is a matter of considerable scholarly dispute and has yet to be fully determined. Bos prefers to follow Helmut Gätje in part and Moritz Steinschneider in holding that this version of the *De Anima* was partially translated into Syriac by Hunayn Ibn Ishâq, completed by his son Ishâq, and finally rendered into Arabic by Ibn Zur'a.<sup>143</sup> In a study published in 2001 Alfred Ivry confirmed that these Latin and Hebrew texts come for the most part from a single Arabic translation, though he argues "for Ishâq ibn Hunayn as the common source for most of the *De anima* quotations and paraphrases brought by Avicenna, Averroes and Zerahyah."<sup>144</sup> Ivry observes that for the *Middle Commentary* "Averroes frequently utilized Themistius' undeclared quotations and paraphrases of Aristotle (often practically identical with their sources)" and also a text of the *De Anima* from the same translator as that of the *Long Commentary*.<sup>145</sup> After establishing to his satisfaction by way of detailed consideration of seven significant textual examples that Ishâq is the translator of the lost Arabic *De Anima* and also the translator of the *Paraphrase* of Themistius, Ivry concludes with an important qualification: "The above illustrations are not meant to claim that Averroes, Zerahyah and the Latin translator always had the exactly identical text before them, given the inevitable corruptions in the transmission of texts, and the likelihood of different recensions of Ishâq's translation. But the Aristotle who emerges from all this is nevertheless predominantly the one Ishâq ibn Hunayn presented to the Muslim philosophers, giving them thereby a common basis for their deliberations."<sup>146</sup>

The importance of that qualification becomes evident from the careful con-

142. See Ibn Sînâ, *Notes on the De Anima* (1947). The *Long Commentary's* Text begins its third book at *De Anima* 3.4, 429a10–13, as did the version used by Avicenna. See Gutas (1988), 61, n. 3. Also see Elamrani-Jamal (2003), 351.

143. Aristotle, *De Anima* (1994), 9–12, particularly 10, n. 3. Steinschneider (1893), (1956), 146. See Elamrani-Jamal (2003), 350, regarding an unfortunate misstatement of his own position by Bos at Aristotle, *De Anima* (1994), 12.

144. Ivry (2001), 64.

145. Ivry (2001), 65. As noted above, Ivry's view is that the *Long Commentary* preceded the *Middle*. He holds that Averroes used Aristotelian lemmata from the *Long Commentary* and his copy of the *De Anima* while writing the *Middle Commentary*.

146. Ivry (2001), 77. The literature and issues concerning the medieval Arabic texts of the *De Anima* are also reviewed by Elamrani-Jamal, who concludes that there were



sideration of the use of the vocabulary of cogitation (*cogitatio*, *cogitare*, *virtus cogitativa*, *cogitabile*) in the Text of the *De Anima* in the *Long Commentary*. As indicated above, the cogitative power is a particular discursive power of the brain for sorting through and denuding images in its role in the process of the formation of intelligibles in act. And it likewise plays an important role in the calling back to mind intelligibles in act previously attained. Moreover, Averroes regards this bodily power as bearing most of the responsibility for activities of will and effort on the part of individual human beings dealing with particular matters and concerns. What is remarkable in the case of the *Long Commentary* is to find just this sort of doctrine in the very Text of the Latin *De Anima* though it is not found in the original Greek. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>147</sup> while the Text of the *Long Commentary* is from the same Arabic translation as the Hebrew translation by Zerahyah, they are from different recensions of that translation. This is evident because the Latin Text often renders a wide array of Greek terms (λογιστικός, λογισμός, λογίζομαι, διανοέομαι, διάνοια, perhaps ὑπολαμβάνω, βουλευώ, βουλευτικός, and δόξα) by *cogitare*, *cogitatio* and other forms of the same root, although the Hebrew generally reflects the Greek more precisely in preserving distinctions between these terms. Careful consideration of the Latin translation gives no support to the view that

three Arabic versions: a first incomplete translation by Ishâq Ibn Hunayn; an anonymous complete translation edited by Badawi; and a second complete translation, possibly the purported second version by Ishâq Ibn Hunayn, preserved today in the Latin of the *Long Commentary* and in the Hebrew of Zerahyah ben Isaac ben Shealtiel Hen. Elamrani-Jamal also notes that the *Middle Commentary* follows the traditional Greek divisions of the text in contrast to the non-traditional divisions found in Avicenna and in Averroes' *Long Commentary*. Elamrani-Jamal (2003), 351. However, the traditional divisions of the *Middle Commentary* may well be a consequence of Averroes' heavy dependence on the *Paraphrase* of Themistius rather than an indication of his possession of a text of the *De Anima* with the traditional divisions of the books different from the text used for the *Long Commentary*. In a forthcoming entry on Ibn Bâjjah in the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Josep Puig Montada includes a supplement on the Arabic translations of the *De Anima*. He holds that the first was the extant anonymous translation edited by Badawi (Aristotle, *De Anima* [1954]), a later second translation was done by Ishâq Ibn Hunayn, and, completing the second, a third translation was perhaps by Ibn Zur'a, which begins at 431a14. As indicated above, Averroes cited the first, older translation just ten times and included all of the Ishâq translation with his commentary without indicating any awareness that it may have been completed by a text from another translator. In a reading of the Ishâq translation through the extant Latin Text, it is far from evident that its Arabic source after 431a14 is by a different translator. Further research on these matters is necessary before definitive determinations may be made.

147. Taylor (1999a), 243ff.

this is the result of changes by the Latin translator. Moreover, Averroes' Comments reflect precisely these Texts, indicating the changed Text was before his eyes. Nor can it be argued that the translator rendering the text into Arabic was responsible for this since the Hebrew retains distinctions of the Greek. To that extent, at least on the issue of the rendering of these distinct terms, the Hebrew bears witness to a superior Arabic rendering of the Greek.<sup>148</sup> For example, Text (18) of the *Long Commentary*, at 430a14–17 [437], incorrectly refers to three intellects, though the Greek mentions only two. In this case the Hebrew is in accord with the Greek. And in this case one can see that the *Middle Commentary on the De Anima*, for which Averroes appears to have used just one translation, seems to access a redaction different from that of the *Long Commentary* since the corresponding passage of the *Middle Commentary* is in accord with the Greek, not the Text of the *Long Commentary*.<sup>149</sup> How it came to pass that Averroes used different redactions of the Ishâq translation in the *Middle Commentary* and in the *Long Commentary* and how it happened that the *Long Commentary* came to have a faulty Text more congruous with Averroes' new teachings on the cogitative power than the original Arabic *De Anima* are unclear at present and must remain issues for future research.

### Theophrastus

Averroes' knowledge of the doctrines of Theophrastus (371–287 B.C.) on the intellect as discussed in the *Long Commentary* comes solely from the citations of Theophrastus in the *Paraphrase* of Themistius.<sup>150</sup> For the most part the name of Theophrastus occurs in the company of that of Themistius though once with that of Nicolaus of Damascus (ca. 64–4 B.C.) [432]. Consideration of the notion that the material intellect cannot be of the genus of the receptivity found in composite substances or in prime matter is said by Averroes to have "brought Theophrastus, Themistius, and several commentators to hold the opinion that the material intellect is a substance which is neither generable nor corruptible" [389]. "Theophrastus, Themistius, and others" are also said to hold that the theoretical intellect (the intellect in a positive disposition) is affected by its mixture with the powers of particular individuals, sometimes weakening it and at other times strengthening it [390–391]. On another occasion Averroes

148. "The Hebrew, however, clearly uses different terms in at least seven cases in which forms of *cogitatio* in the Latin are used to render forms of διανοέομαι (two times), διάνοια (two times), and βουλευτικός (three times)." Taylor (1999a), 246.

149. See [437] and the note to that Text with references to the *Middle Commentary* and the Hebrew *De Anima*.

150. This is clearly established by Gutas (1999b). The text is at Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 107.30–109.3; (1973), 195–198; (1990), 113–117; (1996), 133–134.

remarks that he shares with these thinkers the view "that the material intellect is a power which has not come into being" {392}.

Of greatest philosophical significance for present concerns are Averroes' comments on the so-called

question of Theophrastus, namely, that it is necessary to assert that this intellect has no form and it is necessary to assert also that it is a being; and if not, there would be neither a reception nor a disposition. For the disposition and reception result from the fact that they are not found in a subject. Since it is a being and does not have the nature of a form, then it remains that it has the nature of prime matter, which is altogether unthinkable, for prime matter is neither apprehensive nor discerning. How can this be said regarding something the being of which is such that it is separate?<sup>151</sup> {399}

It is in part this issue which prompts Averroes to take the radical step of asserting his doctrine of the separate and unique material intellect shared by all human knowers. To accommodate the requirements of his analysis of the problems of Aristotle, and in particular that of the necessity that the material intellect be a power in the soul, Averroes takes what for loyal disciples of Aristotle is the ironic step of setting forth a novel interpretation on the nature of the material intellect. As already noted above, he writes that "one should hold that it is a fourth kind of being. For just as sensible being is divided into form and matter, so too intelligible being must be divided into things similar to these two, namely, into something similar to form and into something similar to matter" {409}. That is, the material intellect is both intellect and also receptivity so that the intelligibles may be understood as received into an immaterial intellect. The novelty lies in the contradiction of the common notion of the Greek and Arabic tradition that immaterial intellect—that is, separate existing form—must be actuality without potency. Yet the solution of the problem of the understanding of intelligibles in act requires that these be in an immaterial intellect, indeed, in an immaterial intellect which is not a determinate particular of a species. For the intelligibles understood by human beings to exist as the unique intelligibles in act which make possible the unity of human thought and its referents (and not merely spiritual forms derivative upon the true intelligibles in act, after the fashion of Ibn Bāj-jah),<sup>152</sup> they must be unique, immaterial, and present in one shared intellect.<sup>153</sup>

As indicated above, this new doctrine prompted by the "question of Theo-

151. See Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 107.30–108.8; (1973), 195–196; (1996), 133. The Arabic of the account of Theophrastus is translated by Gutas in Huby (1999), 120.

152. See below, p. xci.

153. The "question of Theophrastus" presented Averroes with an account of the material intellect quite different from that of Themistius, in whose *Paraphrase* the cita-

phrastus" proved for Averroes that receptivity exists in separate intellect—namely, the material intellect. By extending this receptivity to all separate intellects with the sole exception of God, Averroes provided grounds on the basis of which he was able to assert a hierarchy of separate intellects distinguished not only *per accidens* by the various motions they cause in the heavens, but also *per se* by their very natures.<sup>154</sup>

### Alexander of Aphrodisias

The *De Anima* and the *De Intellectu* of Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. ca. 200 CE) in Arabic were studied carefully, used, and quoted by Averroes in the *Long Commentary*.<sup>155</sup> On the challenging issue of the material intellect, Averroes read Al-

tion of Theophrastus on intellect was contained. While for Themistius what Averroes calls the agent intellect was shared and the ground for intersubjective discourse and knowing, Averroes saw Theophrastus as giving reasons for that grounding in a single shared material intellect. This provides the response to the issue raised by Dimitri Gutas when he writes, "The conclusions reached here raise the question why Averroes bothered to mention Theophrastus if he had no access to an independent work by him and if Theophrastus' views were shared by Themistius, and what this indicates about Averroes' conception of the praxis of philosophy. This very significant question deserves separate study." Gutas (1999b), 144. Theophrastus pointed out the need for the receptive (material) intellect to be intellect yet also receptive, to have at once the nature of form and the nature of receptivity, two normally incompatible characteristics in immaterial entities insofar as form without matter is *per se* actual and determinate.

154. See Taylor (forthcoming a) and Harry A. Wolfson's (1958) discussion of the issue of the plurality and distinction of separate substances: "According to the mediaeval explanations there is some kind of distinction of prior and posterior in the immaterial movers themselves, whereas according to our explanation [of Aristotle] there is no distinction at all in the immaterial movers themselves; the distinction between them is only a distinction in their relation to things outside themselves—a distinction of external relation which, as we have shown, does not affect their nature. Now the assumption on the part of the mediaevals of a distinction of prior and posterior, whether that of cause or that of nobility, in the immaterial movers themselves has led to those endless questions as to whether that distinction does not after all imply a relationship of matter and form and also as to whether that relationship of matter and form is compatible with the initial assumption that these immovable movers are immaterial. But to assume, as we do, that the distinction between the immaterial immovable movers is only a distinction in their relation to things outside themselves does not lead to any of those questions" (248–249).

155. The *De Anima* of Alexander is not extant in Arabic (see Alexander, *De Anima* [1887], [1979]), but the *De Intellectu* is. See Alexander, *De Intellectu* (1887), (2004), (1990), (1971), (1956). Regarding the *De Intellectu* in Arabic, see Geoffroy (2002). The work of Alexander is also discussed in the *Short and Middle Commentaries*. For precise passages,



exander as wrongly holding that the material intellect was nothing but the disposition (ἐπιτηδεύσις استعداد, *isti'dād*) itself for the reception of intelligibles, not itself in a subject {395, 430–433, 443–444}. Averroes understood Alexander to believe that this disposition was something which arose from a mixture of physical causes {118, 397–398}. He expounded this as set forth in the *De Anima* of Alexander and then went on to quote the *De Intellectu*: “It is a power made from a mixture which occurred in bodies, [a power] disposed to receive the intellect which is in act” {394}. Both of these views are vehemently attacked by Averroes in the *Long Commentary*. Aristotle writes of the material intellect as a substance which is a disposition and *subject* for the reception of immaterial intelligibles, argues Averroes, not the mere disposition itself {395}. In this Alexander was confused by equivocation regarding the notion of first actuality, writes Averroes. Following Aristotle on the notion that the soul was the first actuality of the body, Alexander thought the first actuality of intellect—that is, the material intellect—must itself also be an actuality of body. Yet “to say *form* and *first actuality* is to speak equivocally about the rational soul and about the other parts of the soul” {397} simply because the activity of the rational part is immaterial while those of other parts of the soul take place in the body or are powers of a body. “It has therefore been explained that the first actuality of the intellect differs from the first actualities of the other powers of the soul and that this word ‘actuality’ is said of these in an equivocal way, contrary to what Alexander thought” {405}. Although soul and receptive material intellect are both first actualities, they are first actualities of completely different sorts: soul is the first actuality of body and material intellect is the first actuality of incorporeal intellect.

Averroes also railed against what he saw to be Alexander’s contradictory accounts of the material intellect and its ability to know the agent intellect and separate forms in these two works. In the *De Anima* of Alexander, writes Averroes, the material intellect and the intellect in a positive disposition are both corruptible with their particular corporeal human subject, yet the intellect which is in us for understanding separate forms must be ungenerated and incorruptible for intellect’s understanding to be possible. If understanding involves a noetic identity of knower and known, then a generated and corruptible material intellect will have to come to be eternal and incorruptible if it is to know the eternal intelligibles {481ff.}. Thus the intellect which understands intelligibles and the separate agent intellect can only be the acquired intellect which has come from outside, not the human material intellect {483}. Yet in his *De Intellectu* Alexander said that the intellect in potency (the material intellect), when “complete and fulfilled . . . will understand the agent intellect”

see the indices of the *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1985) and the *Middle Commentary* (2002).

{483}. Reflecting on these accounts, Averroes concludes that Alexander’s true meaning is that the actualization and fulfillment of the material intellect comes in conjoining with the agent intellect so that it is “the form effected in us” {484}. That is, the agent intellect comes to be *form for us* and, by its being our form, it is we who are able to understand the agent intellect and also the intelligibles which come to be in act from sensibles where they were in potency. Hence, the end is understanding, and the means to this is conjoining with the agent intellect.

For the development of Averroes’ own thought on the nature of the material intellect and human knowing, Alexander’s writings provide three crucial notions, though Averroes makes it clear he is no “Alexandrian” {433}. First, Averroes adopted the notion that the agent intellect is “form for us” as “our final form,” as explicated above. This made it possible for him to argue that the activity of knowing is an activity intrinsic to individual human knowers thanks to this natural presence of the power of agent intellect “in” and at the disposal of our will {439–440}. Here also Averroes follows Alexander in understanding the human intellect in a positive disposition as the theoretical intellect to be an entity not fully identical with the agent intellect {448}. Second, he adopted the rationalist philosophical view that the human end is intellectual understanding via conjoining with the agent intellect. That conjoining is the means to the human end. There is no role here for mystical ascent or postmortem higher enlightenment. Intellectual understanding on the part of individual perishable human beings is the end for human beings, not a stage to something more. Third, he adopted Alexander’s notion of the perishable nature of individual human knowers—that is, the perishable nature of what Averroes calls the theoretical intellect in individuals and the intellect in a positive disposition. Human beings, their corporeal powers of imagination, cogitation, and memory, and their sharing of knowledge in the theoretical intelligibles are all perishable with the natural perishability of their ultimate subject, the body.

### *Themistius*

Averroes made use of the *Paraphrase of the De Anima* by Themistius (ca. 317–388 CE) for all three of his *Commentaries* on the *De Anima*, but it was particularly important for his *Middle Commentary* and his *Long Commentary*. For these works he appears to have made distinct readings of the *Paraphrase*.<sup>156</sup> As the notes to the present translation show, for all three books of his *Long Commentary* Aver-

156. Regarding the Arabic translation, see Lyons’ introduction in Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1973) and Elamrani-Jamal (2003), 352–353. Also see Lyons (1955) and Browne (1986). Themistius’ teachings on the soul are also mentioned by Averroes in his *Short Commentary*. For precise passages, see the indices of *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1985). Lyons, in Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1973), 169–178, provides a

roes frequently consulted and employed this work by Themistius, often without explicit citation of his source. While there is some ambiguity in the *Paraphrase* itself concerning the nature of the intellect, Averroes understands Themistius to discuss four intellects. For Themistius these are the common intellect, the actual intellect, the potential intellect, and the productive intellect. In Averroes' terminology these correspond respectively to the passible intellect (the corporeal internal senses of the human soul—that is, common sense, imagination, cogitation, and memory); the trio acquired intellect—theoretical intellect—intellect in a positive disposition (in the human soul as formed by the action of the next two); the material intellect; and the agent intellect. They differ, however, regarding the natures of these. For Themistius the productive intellect is both transcendent and immanent, with each individual human being possessing, together with a particular potential intellect, a particular actual intellect which is also itself illuminated by the light of the single separate productive intellect. The intersubjective nature of human understanding comes about thanks to this connection of all particular actual intellects illuminated in their actuality by the one separate productive intellect, which contains the forms in act.<sup>157</sup> For Averroes in all his works there is a unity of the agent intellect as the cause of intellectual abstraction and as a cause of primary intellectual principles. However, for the *Long Commentary*, since the agent intellect is only one and in the individual it is the intrinsic formal cause of the activity of abstraction from sensed intentions in the imagination, the unity of human understanding is due to the unity of the material intellect.<sup>158</sup>

With Themistius, Averroes rejects Alexander's account of the material intel-

list of some citations of Themistius by Averroes in various works dealing with the issue of the intellect.

157. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 103.20ff; (1973), 187ff.; (1990), 103ff.; (1996), 128ff. "There is no need to be puzzled if we who are combined from the potential and the actual [intellects] are referred back to one productive intellect, and that what it is to be each of us is derived from that single [intellect]. Where otherwise do the notions that are shared (*koinai ennoiai*) come from? Where is the untaught and identical understanding of primary definitions and primary axioms derived from? For we would not understand one another unless there were a single intellect that we all shared." Ibid. (1996), 129. Ibid. (1899), 103.36–104.3; (1973), 188.17–189.4; (1990), 105. I understand Themistius to hold for a form of participation whereby the transcendent productive intellect comes to be present and acting in individual actual intellects. That the views of Themistius are decidedly influenced by Neoplatonism is held by a number of scholars. See Verbeke in Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1957), introduction, xl ff.; Ballériaux (1989); and Falcon (2005). Blumenthal (1979) understands the account to be more genuinely Aristotelian.

158. The *Paraphrase* of Themistius, its Arabic translation, and Averroes' understanding and use of that text require more study and discussion than permitted here. The

lect as solely a disposition associated with the perishable human body and instead holds it to be an eternal substance in its own right and ungenerated {392, 432–433}. The material intellect or "the intellect which is in potency is conjoined with us before the agent intellect" {447}, and it is this which "has the power to separate forms from matters and to understand them" {487}. For Averroes, Aristotle saw that the material intellect was not form or matter or composite and was followed in this by "Theophrastus, Themistius and several commentators" who "hold the opinion that the material intellect is a substance which is neither generable nor corruptible. For everything which is generable and corruptible is a determinate particular; but it has already been demonstrated that [the material intellect] is not a determinate particular nor a body nor a form in a body" {389}. According to Themistius and himself, Averroes writes, the material intellect and the agent intellect have something in common—namely, the theoretical intellect manifested in the individual human being {447}. For Themistius this theoretical intellect is nothing more than the very contact and conjoining of the agent intellect with the material intellect {444–446, 448, 406}. And the understanding which comes about for us thanks to a "conjoining with the intentions of the imagination" {452} is in fact learning as recollection. It is by our will and effort that the intelligibles of the theoretical intellect come to exist for us as we use intentions of the imagination (intelligibles in potency) to prompt the actualization of the material intellect with intelligibles in act by "the agent intellect insofar as it is form for the material intellect, and this is the theoretical intellect according to him" {445}. On this account of the thought of Themistius, the intelligibles in act are understood to exist first in the agent intellect and then in the material intellect, with recollection and learning being their realization in the material intellect through abstraction founded on sensory experience. This is why it can be said that they "are in [the material intellect] in a disposition diverse from their be-

Arabic text of the *Paraphrase* was far from clear, and in some passages it was up to Averroes to determine both what Themistius meant and what value it had for the issue at stake. In the important case of the nature of the agent intellect and its relation to the material intellect, the views of Themistius himself are complex, and the Arabic text required thoughtful interpretation by Averroes. The Arabic *Paraphrase* is extant in only one faulty manuscript, which has significant omissions and also displays some confusion in the understanding of the text. While it is clear that Averroes had more of the text than is now extant, it is not clear precisely how well the doctrines of Themistius were conveyed throughout. Note that in the *Middle Commentary*, as discussed above, Averroes embraced the view of Themistius that there are a plurality of individual material intellects deriving from the single separate agent intellect, though Averroes did not accept the plurality of agent intellects or actual intellects in individual human beings.

ing in the agent intellect" {452}. Averroes, however, rejects this particular sort of Platonic approach to the issue and holds instead for a genuine abstraction of the intelligible content of human understanding from experience of the world thanks to the enabling activity of the unique agent intellect and the receptive nature of the unique material intellect. For Averroes intelligibles in act do not preexist in the agent intellect.

The Themistian assertion of the separate material intellect was an important source of philosophical inspiration for Averroes, even if Themistius had asserted it to be many. For Averroes it contributed valuably to his reflections on the nature of theoretical intelligibles. He agreed with Alexander that the agent intellect was form for the generation of theoretical intelligibles in the material intellect but disagreed on the perishable nature of the material intellect. He agreed with Themistius on the separate nature of the material intellect but disagreed with him on the intellect in a positive disposition (the theoretical intellect) as constituted by recollection. Rather, as indicated above, for Averroes intelligibles in act are truly generated from intentions of the imagination derived from the world. The intellect in act is generated by the agent intellect's abstractive "light"; the intelligible is "transferred in its being from one order into another" {439} by the power of the agent intellect without the agent intellect itself giving forms as the content of understanding from its own nature. The only forms from the agent intellect are the first principles of reason, the primary natural intelligibles, which yield voluntary intelligibles—that is, intelligibles brought about by our will—when used with the abstractive power of the agent intellect and intentions of the imagination {496–497}. These theoretical intelligibles for Averroes have two subjects, the material intellect as their subject for existence and the human general imaginative power as their subject of truth. They are in the individual human theoretical intellect, where they are perishable, as is their subject, and they are in the material intellect, where they are eternal and imperishable, as is their subject, as explained above. Yet in spite of differences, Averroes does find in Themistius support for the Alexandrian notion that the agent intellect is form for the material intellect and in virtue of that it is "form for us" {445}.

### al-Fârâbî

The work of al-Fârâbî (870–950 CE) on the intellect is foundational for later discussions of soul and intellect in Arabic philosophy, and Averroes drew on it for terminology and philosophical issues.<sup>159</sup> In the *Long Commentary* Averroes cites al-Fârâbî's lost *Commentary on Aristotle's On Generation and Corruption* {493} and

159. Regarding terminology, see Book 3, nn. 32 and 90. The language of "intelligibles in potency" and "intelligibles in act" found throughout the *Long Commentary* is also

his lost *Sophistic Refutations* {444},<sup>160</sup> makes extensive use of al-Fârâbî's *On Intellect and the Intelligible*—that is, *Letter on the Intellect* {420, 483, 486, 491, 493}—and contends strongly against the reported doctrine of the lost *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* {433, 481, 485, 502}. The chief philosophical concern of Averroes regarding al-Fârâbî's account of intellect has to do with a notion central to Averroes' reading of Alexander and Themistius: the relation of the agent intellect to the intellect in us and the characterization of the agent intellect as "form for us."

Averroes understands al-Fârâbî to follow Alexander in holding the receptive material intellect to be a power of the perishable human soul which "abstracts the intentions of things which are outside the soul" {420}. This abstraction of intelligibles in potency brings about distinctly existing intelligibles in act in what al-Fârâbî called the acquired intellect only thanks to the assisting activity of the separate agent intellect which "is nothing but a cause acting upon us only" {485}. Through this a human being by the perfection of the acquired intellect approaches nearer to the agent intellect, no longer needing the body, and in this intellectual fulfillment attains its ultimate happiness.<sup>161</sup> Yet this is problematic in multiple ways, according to Averroes.

First, on this account of understanding, something generated and perishable

derived from al-Fârâbî. See, for example, al-Fârâbî, *Letter on the Intellect* (1983), 15–17; (1973), 215–216; (1974), 97–98. Al-Fârâbî found this language in the *De Intellectu* of Alexander of Aphrodisias: νοητὰ γίνεταί ὅντα δυνάμει ὄντα; Alexander, *De Intellectu* (1887), 108.3–4; "potentially objects of thought become such [i.e., in actuality]"; ibid. (1990); 108.3–4; "تصير معقولة بالفعل إذ كانت بالقوة معقولة"; ibid. (1971), 34.5; (1956), 185.1–2. On al-Fârâbî's doctrine of intellect, see Davidson (1992), 44–73; Lucchetta in al-Fârâbî, *Letter on the Intellect* (1974), 18ff.; and Geoffroy (2002). Geoffroy argues that the teachings of al-Fârâbî are based on Alexander rather than a direct study of Aristotle's *De Anima*.

160. Al-Fârâbî, *Book of Sophistic Refutations* (1983), is not the work to which Averroes refers here.

161. Al-Fârâbî, *Letter on the Intellect* (1983), 31; (1973), 219–220; (1974), 104–105. Al-Fârâbî's teaching in this work is that the extrinsic agent intellect by efficient causality provides to the human soul the power required for the abstraction of intelligibles, thereby actualizing potential intellect into actual intellect: "The agent intellect which Aristotle mentioned in the third treatise of the *De Anima* is a separate form which never existed in matter nor ever will exist in it, and it is in a certain manner an intellect in actuality close in likeness to the acquired intellect. The agent intellect is that principle which makes (جعل *ja'ala*) that essence which was an intellect in potentiality, an intellect in actuality and which makes (جعل *ja'ala*) the intelligibles which are intelligibles in potentiality, intelligibles in actuality." Al-Fârâbî, *Letter on the Intellect* (1983), 24–25; (1973), 218; (1974), 102. Translation slightly modified. In *The Political Regime* al-Fârâbî writes that the agent intellect "makes (يجعل *yaj'alu*) the things which are not in their essences intelligible to be intelligible." It raises (يرفعها *yarfa'u-hâ*) things which are not per se

(the human material intellect) will come to be something eternal, if knowing is a noetic identity. That is, "it will happen that something generated receives something eternal and is made like it, and in this way what is generated will become eternal, which is impossible" {485}. Second, the nature of the intelligibles in the acquired intellect is problematic since they are not the very intelligibles in act but rather are distinct from the intelligibles in act in the agent intellect. Another intellect will be needed to abstract from the intelligibles in the acquired intellect more intelligibles, and so forth to infinity, unless somehow the intelligibles in the acquired intellect are the very intelligibles in act in the agent intellect {493}. Third, if the human perfection or end is merely the perfection involved in the reception of theoretical intelligibles in a perishable substance and not a true conjoining with the separate agent intellect as intrinsic to the soul, then the agent intellect's "relation to a human being will be only the relation of the agent to the human being, not a relation of form" {502}. According to Averroes the result of this will be that the abstractive process of understanding intelligibles in act will belong not to human beings but to the separate agent intellect alone, and humans will only be recipients of its agent causality. That is, the agent intellect will be what provides forms through its own abstractive power to human beings, and "there will be no difference between relating it to a human being and relating it to all beings except in virtue of the diversity of its activity in them" {502}. Such a relationship of an extrinsic efficient cause (the agent intellect) giving forms intelligible in act to distinct human material intellects (resulting in acquired intellects) may by implication raise the question of whether human beings are per se rational or are dominated so only thanks to what they receive from the agent intellect.

As Averroes sees it, these issues arise if the relationship of the agent intellect is that of external efficient cause and not that of formal cause—precisely what Averroes reports regarding al-Fârâbî's teachings in his lost *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*. "For in his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* he seems to deny that there is conjoining with the separate intelligences.<sup>162</sup> He says that this is the opinion of Alexander and that it should not be held that the human end is anything but theoretical perfection" {433}. If the fulfillment

intelligibles to a rank of existence higher than they possessed naturally so that they are intelligibles for the human intellect in act. In this way the agent intellect causes them to become intelligibles in act for the human rational power, assisting it to reach the rank of the agent intellect, which is the end of human beings in their perfection and happiness. al-Fârâbî, *Political Regime* (1964), 34–35.

162. See Pines (1978), (1979), and (1990), and Davidson (1992), 70–73. For the source of this in Ibn Bâjjah, see Harvey (1992a) 225, n. 56. My thanks to Joshua Parens for assistance with references.

of the perishable theoretical intellect is the only perfection possible, this is because conjoining is not possible. And that conjoining in noetic identity of the acquired intellect with the agent intellect is not possible because it makes no sense to think that what is generated and corruptible can become eternal and incorruptible. But the problem lies in al-Fârâbî's failing to conceive of the agent intellect as formal cause. "In this way its relation to a human being will be only the relation of the agent to the human being, not a relation of form, and the question of al-Fârâbî which he voiced in his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* arises. For assurance of the possibility of the conjoining of the intellect with us lies in explaining that its relation to a human being is a relation of form and agent, not a relation of agent alone" {502}. That is, al-Fârâbî did not understand that the agent intellect must have its activity as genuinely *in* our souls as formal cause in the abstractive process of understanding {438}. What is more, for Averroes the material intellect too must be *in* our souls {406}, such that there are not two sets of intelligibles and a consequent generation of an infinite regress of abstractions. Rather, there must be one set of unique intelligibles in act realized in the separate material intellect, which is also somehow present *in* our souls as the theoretical intelligibles in us.

### Ibn Bâjjah

The works of Ibn Bâjjah<sup>163</sup> (ca. 1085/90–1138 CE) cited by Averroes in the *Long Commentary* are his *Book on the Soul*,<sup>164</sup> *Treatise on Conjoining with the Intellect*, and *Letter of Farewell*. In these works Ibn Bâjjah was intensely concerned with the issue of the nature of the receptive human intellectual power, the material intellect, so much so that Averroes writes, "This question did not leave his mind nor over time did he take his eye off it. . . . For this topic is extremely difficult, and since such was the case for Ibn Bâjjah in regard to this question, how much more [can be expected] of any one else?!" {487}.

As indicated above concerning Averroes' *Short Commentary on the De Anima*, Ibn Bâjjah's teaching on the material intellect as a disposition having the forms of the imagination as its subject was adopted by Averroes in that work. The *Middle Commentary* rejected that approach in part because it entailed that the material intellect be body or a power in a body, an objection the *Long Commentary* repeats. There Averroes explains that Ibn Bâjjah had thought locating

163. Ibn Bâjjah is referred to as Avempace in Books 2 and 3 except for two references to him as Abubacher (that is, Abû Bakr) at {397}. Interestingly enough, Albertus Magnus thought Abû Bakr referred to the physician Abû Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Zakarîyah al-Râzî (d. 925), known in Latin as Rhazes. See Bach (1881), 122–129.

164. Ibn Bâjjah, *Book on the Soul* (1960), (1961). This work is incomplete in manuscript, ending abruptly shortly after the beginning of the section on the rational power.

the material intellect as a power in the imagination would enable him "to avoid the impossible results [reached] by Alexander, namely, that the subject receiving the intelligible forms is a body made from the elements or a power in a body" {397}. Averroes also objects that Ibn Bâjjah considers that "the disposition for intelligibles which is in the imaginative power is similar to the dispositions which are in the other powers of the soul" {405} because common to both these dispositions is that they are generable and corruptible. That is, for each the disposition is "generated through the generation of an individual, corrupted through its corruption, and generally numbered through its numbering. They differ in this: one is a disposition in a mover insofar as it is a mover, namely, the disposition which is in the intentions {406} imagined;<sup>165</sup> the other is a disposition in the recipient and is a disposition which is in the first actualities of the other parts of the soul." The disposition in the imagination is one which actively provides intelligibles in potency for abstraction, while the disposition which is the material intellect is receptive in nature. Yet, as Averroes says, "these two dispositions differ as [much as] the earth from the heavens. For one is the disposition in the mover insofar as it is a mover and the other is a disposition in the moved insofar as it is moved and receptive" {406}. That is, there is an equivocation on the term "disposition" here: the material intellect is posited as a disposition receptive of immaterial non-particular intelligibles in act that is completely different from the disposition of the imagination, which provides only particular, individual intentions intelligible in potency. This criticism of Ibn Bâjjah corresponds with the stage which the *Middle Commentary* represents in its argument that receptive material intellect is a remote disposition caused by the agent intellect and belonging individually to each human being as a power associated with that human being's soul but not present in the human soul as in a subject. This immaterial power, provided at birth by the agent intellect, is capable of being fully actualized when mature, again by the power of the agent intellect. That approach took into account the difference between the disposition of imagination and that of material intellect.

Ibn Bâjjah's assertion of a plurality of individual human receptive material intellects actualized as theoretical intellects posed a serious challenge to Averroes' doctrine of a single, shared, immaterial intellect for all human beings. Ibn Bâjjah had already spelled out objections to it.<sup>166</sup> If it is the case that all intelligibles are one in number for each human being, individual talent or ef-

165. "The imaginative form is the first mover in man." Ibn Bâjjah, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), 12; Spanish, 29; (1968), 159; (1981), 185.

166. "Generally it is thought that the impossible things which result for this position result for our position because the intellect which is in a positive disposition is one in number. Ibn Bâjjah already listed most of these in his short work which he called *The Conjoining of the Intellect with Human Beings*" {404}.

fort would be in vain since each human being would have those intelligibles insofar as that human is a member of the species. And if those intelligibles are not one in number for all, the distinct intelligibles in two different persons would require a third intelligible in act as what is common to those two, with a resultant infinite regress, which cannot be the case if there is actual understanding of intelligibles in act. Furthermore, if intelligibles are apprehended by individuals in their own material intellects, since an individual's intelligibles arise from sensory experience of particulars, then those intelligibles are tied to the experience of particulars or a set of particulars which gave rise to them. Anyone who has not, for example, had the sensory experience of a giraffe cannot possess the intelligible form of a giraffe. And if the intelligibles are related in this way to the individual, when the individual perishes, so too would the intelligibles. The solution for Ibn Bâjjah is that the forms existing in individual human material intellects are spiritual forms or intentions, and it is by way of these that human beings are conjoined to the intelligible forms.<sup>167</sup> And for Ibn Bâjjah the proximate end is the unity of all human intellects in the agent intellect, and the ultimate end is unity of all intellects in complete conjoining, described as the attainment of divinity, as indicated above.

Averroes saw another challenge from the accounts of Ibn Bâjjah to his teaching on the unity of the material intellect concerning the model for the material intellect and its relation to individual human beings in the *Middle Commentary*—namely, the relationship of the celestial bodies and their associated intellectual souls. In that work the material intellect was understood to be related to the human soul as the celestial intellectual soul is related to the celestial body—that is, as associated with but not present in the soul or celestial body as in a subject. There it was argued that each human soul has its own associated material intellect. In light of that, how could Averroes' final teaching on the unique and shared separate material intellect hold that there was one intellect for many human souls? In the case of the separate celestial bodies, which are unique in species, there is also only one intellect for each, and it would be superfluous to have more than one intellectual mover, since the celestial body is moved by one intention, for which one intellect suffices. Similarly, one sailor does not pilot more than one ship at a time, nor does one artisan need and employ more than one tool of a kind at a time. Hence, it seems each soul should have its own intellect and that one intellect with the same intention shared by all would be useless. Indeed, if the latter were the case, there should be only one theoretical intellect, not many {403–404}. But there is a plurality of theoretical intellects, so why should there not be a plurality of material intellects?

167. Ibn Bâjjah, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), 14–16; Spanish, 32–35; (1968), 162–164; (1981), 187–188.

These challenges from his analysis of the thought of Ibn Bâjjah were dealt with directly and at length by Averroes. One task was to explain how there could be a plurality of individual theoretical intellects without the generation of an infinite regress of intelligibles. Another was to explain how there could be a unity of intelligibles such that what was in one theoretical intellect as an intelligible in act was also in another theoretical intellect as the same intelligible in act. As explained above, Averroes' ultimate solution was the assertion of the unique material intellect as existing *in* human souls as shared by all human beings. It was to locate both the material intellect and the agent intellect as powers *in* the soul, thanks to his positing of the unique shared material intellect and of the special nature of the agent intellect as intrinsic form for us. Averroes' response to Ibn Bâjjah is twofold. First, he accuses Ibn Bâjjah of equivocation on the term "intellect" when used in reference to the agent intellect and the theoretical intellect. "This name, however, namely, 'intellect,' is said equivocally of the theoretical and the agent [intellects]" {412}. If the theoretical intellect is truly to be intellect and its theoretical intelligibles truly to be intelligibles in act, then it must be intellect in the same sense as the agent intellect, which contains the intelligibles in act. But this is not so, since it is only the agent intellect, which contains the ultimate intelligibles in act for Ibn Bâjjah. The theoretical intellects in individuals do not contain the intelligibles in act for Ibn Bâjjah but rather only spiritual forms or intentions related to and representative of the true intelligibles in act properly located in the agent intellect. In this sense, then, intellect is not predicated in the same way of the agent intellect and the theoretical intellect {412–413}. For Averroes this challenge can be fully met only if the theoretical intelligibles are both present in the separate material intellect as eternal in accord with their subject and at the same time present in the theoretical intellects of the perishable subjects that human beings are. Again, this is to locate the material intellect and its actualization by the agent intellect as *in* the soul.

Second, on Averroes' view, Ibn Bâjjah's difficulties resulted from a failure to understand that both the material intellect and the agent intellect must somehow be located *in* the soul for it to be the case that human beings have intellectual understanding of things of the world. Ibn Bâjjah's argument for the theoretical intellect as coming to have the intelligibles in act—if there is no equivocation on the term "intellect"—necessarily entailed that the agent intellect must be the form of the theoretical intellect. To say otherwise is to say either that (a) the intelligibles in the theoretical intellect are not the same intelligibles in the agent intellect and so are not intelligibles in act, or (b) the theoretical intellect is not intellect. With the agent intellect as form of the theoretical intellect, the activity of abstraction of intelligibles is our activity by our will. Moreover, when the agent intellect by its power of abstraction transfers what is intelligible in potency into a new mode of being as intelligible in act {439}, it has

two activities, abstraction or separation of the intention from its material conditions and the enabling of the realization of the intelligible in act in the material intellect. Since it is the individual person who goes from not understanding the intelligible to understanding the intelligible, these activities take place in us. Such a thing can only happen by our will if the power of such abstraction and reception is truly ours—that is, only if the agent intellect is in us as form for us and the theoretical intelligibles of the material intellect are also in us. Simply put, the potentiality for the presence of the material intellect and the agent intellect intimately involved in human understanding must be part of the definition of human beings as rational animals, even if their presence does not manifest itself equally in every member of the species.<sup>168</sup>

*Other Sources for Averroes:*

*Plato, Galen, Avicenna, Nicolaus of Damascus,  
the De Aspectibus, and Abû al-Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib*

Averroes' understanding of Plato (427–347 BC) in the *Long Commentary* is for the most part dependent on the works of Aristotle, Galen's *Compendium of the Timaeus*, and the *Paraphrase of the De Anima* by Themistius, though Averroes did himself know the *Republic*, on which he wrote a paraphrasing commentary toward the end of his life.<sup>169</sup> Attributing to Plato the use of the method of division in the study of the soul {9}, Averroes recounts Aristotle's criticism that Plato's views concerned every soul, not just the human soul {12}. According to Averroes, on Plato's account in the *Timaeus* the powers of the soul correspond to distinct parts of the body {120–121}, understanding to the brain, the concupiscible to the heart, and the nutritive to the liver {10}, such that the bodily subject for knowing and understanding is not the same as for other powers {380}. Averroes portrays the Platonic doctrine of forms as intelligibles existing in themselves outside the soul {12, 409} as eternal {452} "universal things" {12} which are not apprehended by way of sensibles {425}. Rather, knowing and learning consist in the recollection of those universals {218, 412, 452}. Averroes also mentions Plato's understanding of flavors, relying on the account of the *Timaeus* in Galen {322} that the soul has three parts: the rational, the emotional, and the desiderative {509}.

Averroes makes critical reference to Galen (129–ca. 210 CE) in regard to three distinct issues: respiration, flavor, and the bodily nature of the rational power.<sup>170</sup> Averroes mentions that he does not have access to the discussion of respiration in Aristotle's *On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death, and Respiration* and that what

168. See above, p. xlvii.

169. See *On Plato's Republic* (1974).

170. Averroes was well acquainted with the thought of Galen and commented on a number of his treatises. See *Commentaria Averrois in Galenum* (1984), (1998), and *Medical*



Galen had said on respiration is not adequate.<sup>171</sup> He goes on to say that for Aristotle breathing takes place for the sake of cooling the heart by inhaling cool air into the lungs and exhaling for the sake of the lungs, which are cooled by this exhalation of warm air [266–267]. Apparently Averroes understood Galen, who rejected Aristotle's explanation that respiration was primarily for cooling the heart,<sup>172</sup> to attribute the movement only to the chest, while Averroes thought the accumulated warmed air in the lungs also to be a cause. Galen is also incorrect in holding the association of flavors and temperature, believing that the acrid is cold and the pungent warm, says Averroes, since bitterness is found in warm and cold things [291–293]. Galen was correct in following Plato in asserting a role for texture in flavor, remarks Averroes [322]. Yet Galen was incorrect in asserting that the rational power was a bodily power identical to the cogitative power. In this, says Averroes, Galen made a logical mistake with the second figure of the syllogism. From the facts that human beings have a rational power and that they have a cogitative power located in the brain, it does not follow with necessity that the rational power is the same as the cogitative power [415–417].

Averroes gives scant explicit attention to the teachings of Avicenna (980–1037 CE) in the *Long Commentary*, though he is aware of important Avicennian teachings. In explaining that universal propositions in judgments concern things potentially infinite in number, Averroes asserts that the particular powers of the soul can judge only finite or particular intentions. Hence, what judges regarding universal or infinite propositions should itself not be a power of the soul mixed with the body and finite in nature. That is, it should be a power unmixed with the body. From this Averroes concludes that “judgment and discernment in us are ascribed only to the material intellect” and asserts that this is a proposition Avicenna held [442].<sup>173</sup> Certainly this is correct since Avi-

*Manuscripts of Averroes* (1986). On Galen in Arabic, see the account of Anawati and Ghalioungui in *Medical Manuscripts of Averroes* (1986), 16–36; Bürgel (1967); Sezgin (2000); and Walzer (1965).

171. In his well-known medical compendium, *Kitâb al-Kulliyât*, he also makes the remark that this is an issue which requires more study. See *Kitâb al-Kulliyât* (2000), 88.

172. See Siegel (1968), 162.

173. Gutas (1988), 61, calls attention to Avicenna's *Letter to Kiyâ*, where Avicenna asserts that a key principle for Aristotle is found in the latter's discussion of Democritus, which presupposes that intelligibles can exist only in immaterial subjects. In his own context Averroes is asserting that universal judgments concerning intelligibles can take place only in immaterial subjects. Hence, the cogitative power located in the brain cannot be the rational power by which human beings make universal judgments. Regarding the issue of the material intellect with which Averroes was much obsessed, Davidson (1992), 258, remarks: “Avicenna took up the nature of the human material intellect

cenna understood the human soul, insofar as it was rational, to be separable and distinct in its own right from the body [441–442]. Yet Avicenna, writes Averroes, “followed Aristotle only in dialectics, but in other things he erred, and chiefly in the case of metaphysics . . . because he began, as it were, from his own perspective” [470]. Although these are the only remarks on Avicenna in the *Long Commentary*, Averroes was well aware of the teachings of Avicenna on the soul. For example, Averroes' remarks in his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* and elsewhere make it clear that he was familiar with Avicenna's doctrine of the separate agent intellect. There he refers to Avicenna's doctrine of substantial change taking place only by way of the agent intellect as Giver of Forms (واهب الصور *wâhib al-ṣuwar*, *dator formarum*).<sup>174</sup> He was also aware of Avicenna's teachings on the internal sense powers and rejected Avicenna's account of *wahm*, the estimative faculty which apprehends and judges non-sensible intentions. What is more, Averroes declines to follow Avicenna's distinction of the retentive imagination and the compositive imagination, instead absorbing the functions of the latter into the cogitative power. Still, Avicenna's teachings on the inner senses and the powers of the brain were an important influence on the development of Averroes' thought, even if he revised it in accord with his own interpretation of the texts of Aristotle.

Averroes makes brief references to a summary of Aristotle's *Movement of Animals* by Nicolaus of Damascus (ca. 64–4 BC) in the context of a discussion of appetite as the form of the body of an animal in motion [524] and remarks that Nicolaus is among the reliable interpreters of Aristotle [432]. He also makes two references to a work called *De Aspectibus* (*On Perspectives*) for the notions that light travels in a straight line and that a bright sphere is so owing to its being a “body . . . luminous from all its parts” [253–254]. These are likely references to the *Optics* of Ibn al-Haytham (ca. 965–1039 CE), which was widely known, though in context the issue concerns the geometry of light, something taken up by al-Kindî (ca. 801–873 CE) in *On the Causes of Differences of Perspective* and *On the Geometrical Demonstrations for Them*, which was also known in Latin as *De As-*

only indirectly, in the course of treating a different issue that preempted the question of the material intellect's nature. He maintained that the human soul, and not merely the intellect, is ‘an incorporeal substance,’ which is brought into existence together with the generation of each human body.”

174. See *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), 882, 1496, 1498; (1962), 181rA, 304rA–vG; (1984), 107–109; and Davidson (1992), 245. Hasse (2000), 188, remarks regarding Avicenna's use of the description “giver of forms” (*wâhib al-ṣuwar*, *dator formarum*) that “Avicenna himself never seems to explicitly identify the giver of forms and the active intellect.” He adds that “Averroes writes that Avicenna identifies the active intellect and the giver of forms, but he clearly refers to substantial and not to intelligible forms.”

pectibus. One reference is also made to a contemporary rival of Avicenna, the Nestorian physician, theologian, and philosopher Abû al-Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib, whom Averroes criticizes for holding that the cogitative power is the rational power in Ibn al-Ṭayyib's lost *Commentary on Sense and Sensibilia* {416}.<sup>175</sup>

### The Influence of the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*

In the Arabic tradition the *Long Commentary* is not known to have had any substantive influence. Puig (1992) has found references to some ten disciples of Averroes in Arabic sources, but few are philosophers and none is known to have pursued issues concerning the nature of the intellect with the exception of his son, Abû Muḥammad 'Abdallâh Ibn Rushd. A physician and scholar who wrote on medical matters, he is also the author of a treatise apparently written during the lifetime of Averroes, *On Whether the Active Intellect Unites with the Material Intellect Whilst It Is Clothed with the Body*, which has been edited in its Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin versions and translated into English by Charles Burnett and Mauro Zonta.<sup>176</sup> The historical evidence indicates that the suppression of philosophy in Andalusia which took place toward the end of Averroes' life sorely affected the study and transmission of his thought in the Arabic tradition.<sup>177</sup> Present knowledge for the most part supports the view that while many works survived in Arabic, his philosophical writings played no detectable part in the development of philosophical tradition in Arabic until a revival of interest came about following the appearance of Renan's *Averroès et l'averroïsme* in 1852.<sup>178</sup> As von Kügelgen has explained, there was a rediscovery of Averroes in the nineteenth century, followed by much use of his work and name for the furthering of various political causes espoused by nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers of Egypt and elsewhere.<sup>179</sup> Yet there is little evi-

175. This commentary is not extant, but Peters (1968), 46, remarks that it is mentioned by the biographer Hajji Khalifah and cited by a disciple of Avicenna. On Ibn al-Ṭayyib, see Vernet (1971), 955a; Yousif (1997), 137–142, and (2003), 227–234; and Gyekye (1979), 20.

176. Burnett and Zonta (2000). Note that this treatise is precisely concerned with the issue of *De Anima* 3.7, 431b17–19, that of whether it is possible to have knowledge while in the body.

177. See Puig (1992), 251–255.

178. Renan (1852). Burnett (1999) provides references to a few studies indicating some knowledge of Averroes' work among Western Muslims and also argues that some credence might be given to the traditional story of the sons of Averroes at the court of Emperor Frederick.

179. Von Kügelgen (1994), (1996).

dence of the Arabic *Long Commentary* being studied or even surviving among Arab thinkers, aside from the extant Arabic fragments.<sup>180</sup>

In the Jewish tradition the translated works of Averroes were powerfully influential up to the middle of the sixteenth century, but his works translated into Hebrew were mostly different from those translated into Latin.<sup>181</sup> While the thirteenth-century Latin West had Averroes' mature *Long Commentaries* on the *De Anima*, *Physics*, *De Caelo*, and *Metaphysics*, it had few of his *Middle Commentaries* and nothing of his dialectical and religious writings.<sup>182</sup> In contrast, the *Decisive Treatise*; the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*; many *Short Commentaries*; the *Middle Commentaries* on the *Physics*, *De Caelo*, *De Anima*, and *Metaphysics*; and the *Long Commentaries* on the *Posterior Analytics* and *Physics* came to be available in Hebrew and were extensively used, even more than the works of Aristotle. As Steven Harvey puts it, "At the heart of this translation movement was not, as one might have expected, the works of Aristotle, the philosopher, but rather the many commentaries of Averroes on the Aristotelian corpus."<sup>183</sup> However, the mature *Long Commentary on the De Anima* is not known to have been translated from Arabic into Hebrew, and its influence on Jewish thinkers came via Latin thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas. At least portions of an early version of the *Long Commentary* were available in Jewish schools, as evidenced in the extant fragments, some of which have been studied in depth by Geoffroy and Sirat in research preliminary to the future publication of fragments only in part published by Ben Chehida.<sup>184</sup> The *Long Commentary* was translated into Hebrew by Ibn Ya'ish (Abraham di Benevento) in the late fifteenth century from the Latin. The alternate versions of Book 3, Comments 5 and 36, by Jacob Mantino, found in the Giunta editions may be from this Hebrew-from-Latin translation.<sup>185</sup>

In contrast with the Arabic tradition, the works of Averroes translated into

180. *Long Commentary Fragments* (1985), (2005). These are found as marginal notes to the *Middle Commentary on the De Anima* in the Arabic in Hebrew script manuscript, Modena, a.j.6.23, one of the two primary manuscripts used in *Middle Commentary* (2002). For more information, see Geoffroy and Sirat in *Long Commentary Fragments* (2005).

181. See Ivry (1983) and Harvey (2005).

182. See n. 1 for bibliographies of his works, particularly Anawati (1978), which has a foldout chart of works and translations, and Wirmer, Thomas Institut (2006).

183. Harvey (2003), 268. On the role of Maimonides in the determination of the importance of Averroes in the Jewish tradition, see Harvey (1992b) and (2003).

184. See *Long Commentary Fragments* (2005) and (1985) respectively.

185. See Davidson (1992), 263, n. 24, on the various possible sources for these Latin texts. Also see Wolfson (1963), appendices I and II, 445–454 in the 1973 reprint. Zonta (1994) provides a list of extant Hebrew manuscripts of the *Long Commentary* and a discussion of Mantino's translations of Book 3, Comments 5 and 36. Tamani and Zonta (1997) contains lists of Hebrew manuscripts in Italian libraries and two important essays



Latin from Arabic mostly in the thirteenth century (and from Hebrew in Renaissance times) were ubiquitously present wherever the study of Aristotle and the interpretation of his philosophical doctrines took place through the time of the Renaissance and beyond.<sup>186</sup> The term "Averroism" (sometimes relabeled "heterodox Aristotelianism") is generally applied to selected writings of philosophers supportive of one or more of three characteristic notions: the world had no beginning, happiness can be attained naturally in the present life, and the single unitary material intellect is shared by all human knowers—all genuine doctrines of the mature Averroes.<sup>187</sup> Siger of Brabant (ca.1240–after 1282) of the Arts Faculty at Paris, the most well-known proponent of a philosophical psychology conceived under the influence of Averroes' *Long Commentary* in the mid-thirteenth century,<sup>188</sup> was in all likelihood the unnamed target of the vehement attack on Averroism and the doctrine of the material intellect in Averroes by Thomas Aquinas in his *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists*.<sup>189</sup> The Condemnation of 1270 and, most important, the Condemnation of 1277 had a substantial effect on the study and use of the thought of Averroes in the Latin West, but the study of Averroes on intellect by no means ceased.<sup>190</sup> Siger was later followed by John of Jandun (ca. 1285–1328), who, like Siger, died while in some form of exile and condemnation.<sup>191</sup> For the Latin tradition, the *Long Commentary on the De*

in Italian, one on "Aristotle and Aristotelianism in Medieval Judaism," by Zonta, and "Diffusion, Conservation and Study of 'Aristotelian' Manuscripts," by Tamani. For brief accounts of Jewish Averroism, see Harvey (2003) and (2005) and Leaman (1996) and (1998b). Also see Zonta (1996) and the classic Steinschneider (1956).

186. See Wolfson (1961) and Schmitt (1979) and (1983).

187. For a brief account of Averroism, see Ebbesen (1998).

188. See Bazán (2003) for a brief account of Siger's work and the progressive development of his views on the nature of the intellect from his early embrace of Averroes' view of the unity of the separate, shared material intellect to "the traditional anthropological dualism that was pervasive during the first half of the thirteenth century" (638). For a list of important recent primary and secondary sources for the study of the thought of Siger, see Bazán (2003), 639–640. Fernand Van Steenberghen (1977) provides a comprehensive account of the scholarship up to 1977 in his *Maître Siger de Brabant*. Also see Wippel (1998). The famous work of Pierre Mandonnet (1899) prompted modern interest in Siger.

189. See Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate* (1976). For an analysis of Aquinas' various critiques of Averroes, see Mahoney (1994). For a different approach to the issue, see Taylor (1999b). For an account of positive contributions of Averroes' thought to that of Aquinas, see Wéber (1978). Albert the Great also wrote a *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*. See Albertus Magnus *De unitate* (1975). Also see Wéber (1994).

190. See Wippel (1977), (1998), and (2003).

191. For a brief account of John of Jandun and his thought, see South (2003). For a comprehensive study of his Averroist noetics, see Brenet (2003).

*Anima* was deeply important and widely studied by so many of the important philosophical and theological figures of the later Middle Ages and Renaissance after its translation around 1220 that it is far beyond the parameters of this introduction to recount the issues and developments.<sup>192</sup> Nevertheless, some important clarifications must be made regarding the present-day understanding of the reception of the *Long Commentary* and its teachings in the thirteenth century.

Averroes' teachings on the nature of the soul in the *Long Commentary* were initially welcomed in the Latin West, in part as a corrective of the views on the soul set forth in the *De Anima* treatise by Avicenna, which was available in Latin well prior to the *Long Commentary*. In his *De Anima* Avicenna taught that the agent intellect was a distinct immaterial and separate substance functioning as a giver of forms both to the physical world and to the individual receptive rational souls of human knowers. According to Avicenna in this work, sense perception and imagination prepared the immaterial rational soul for the reception of intelligibles from the agent intellect.<sup>193</sup> While this account may have some affinity to Augustinian illuminationist views, it still has the untoward consequence that it separates the abstractive power of intellect from the individual human being in whom the powers of knowing, willing, and acting were held naturally to reside. Hence, when Averroes writes that the agent intellect is "in the soul,"<sup>194</sup> that the agent intellect, the material intellect, and the theoretical intellect are "in the soul,"<sup>195</sup> and that universals are "in the soul,"<sup>196</sup> he provides what appears to be a welcome correction based on a proper reading of Aristotle's own text of the *De Anima*.<sup>197</sup>

In 1937 Dominique Salman introduced the notion that the influence of Aver-

192. See Nardi (1945) and (1958), Van Steenberghen (1966), Kuksewicz (1968), Schmitt (1979), Kessler (1988), and Poppi (1991), as well as the more recent studies listed in Bazán (2003).

193. *Sed causa dandi formam intelligibilem non est nisi intelligentia in effectu, penes quam sunt principia formarum intelligibilium abstractarum*. Ibn Sinâ, *Kitâb al-Nafs* (1968), 126–127; (1959) 234. *Restat ergo ut ultima pars sit vera, et ut discere non sit nisi inquirere perfectam aptitudinem coniungendi se intelligentiae agenti, quousque fiat ex ea intellectus qui est simplex, a quo emanent formae ordinatae in anima mediante cogitatione*. Ibid. (1968), 148–149; (1959), 246–247. This traditional understanding of Avicenna has recently been challenged. See Gutas (2001) and Hasse (2001).

194. See {390}, {438}.

195. See {406}, {437}.

196. See {220–221}.

197. The importance to the theological and philosophical tradition in the Latin West that the agent intellect be an individual power of each human soul is stressed by Bazán (2001), 179, when he writes in reference to the Condemnation of 1277, "It is of great philosophical interest to see this doctrine receive official sanction by the ecclesiastical

roes in the Latin West, particularly with respect to his teachings on the soul, took place in two distinct steps.<sup>198</sup> The first encounter with Averroes was a positive one in which the perceived teachings of Averroes on the presence of the powers of the agent and material intellects in the soul were much welcomed, while the teaching on the separately existing material intellect went undetected.<sup>199</sup> Later, when the full import of Averroes' doctrines on the intellects came to be understood, a very different and adversarial approach was taken by the likes of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas.

René Antoine Gauthier further refines this thesis in a series of articles and in the introduction to the critical edition of the *Commentary on the De Anima* by Thomas Aquinas.<sup>200</sup> According to Gauthier, the psychological doctrines of First Averroism correspond precisely to the genuine teaching of Averroes, while the later Second Averroism, which gave rise to the famous conflict on the unity of the intellect in the thirteenth century and beyond, was in fact an invention on the part of Christian theologians. He notes that the doctrine that came to be considered most characteristic of the philosophical psychology of Averroes and of thirteenth-century Latin Averroism, the unity of the possible or receptive human intellect (which Averroes called the material intellect), was first distinctly condemned by Robert Kilwardby and Bonaventure around 1252.<sup>201</sup> Gauthier then goes on to state that "One admits actually more and more today that Averroes was not an averroist," citing the work of Salvador Gómez Nogales.<sup>202</sup>

authorities of Paris because of its direct impact on the nature, object and scope of human knowledge. In the final analysis, it is the agent intellect, as an active faculty of the intellectual soul, that determines what we, as human beings, can or cannot understand scientifically, including Metaphysics."

198. Salman (1937).

199. "Breaking from the tradition of 'all the philosophers' (Alfarabi, Avicenna, Algazel, Isaac [Israeli]) and of the 'theologians,' this averroism according to the first way makes acceptable to the young Albert the Great a conception of the agent intellect to which he will always remain faithful, and which he will transmit to his disciple Thomas Aquinas. Later undoubtedly, Albert will correct his historical interpretation of Averroes and then will rely only on the sole authority of Aristotle." Salman (1937), 211–212. Bazán (1989), 10, points out that Salman's notion "that the first Latins who used Averroes attributed to the Arab master the theory of the multiplicity of agent and possible intellects, and opposed this doctrine to Avicenna's separate Agent Intellect . . . was repeated by G. de Mattos in 1940, Miller in 1954 and by F. Van Steenberghen in 1966."

200. See Gauthier (1982b) and his preface in Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri De anima* (1984), 221\*–222\*. Also see Gauthier (1982a), (1983), and (1984).

201. Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri De anima* (1984), 221\*–222\*.

202. Ibid. Cf. Leaman (1994) for a quite different approach to the issue of Averroes and Averroism.

In 1976 Gómez Nogales published a short article entitled "Saint Thomas, Averroès et l'averroïsme," in which he argued that Averroes did not profess the unity of the human intellect but rather held for individual immortality of the soul, as well as the individual material intellect.<sup>203</sup> This Gómez Nogales sees supported by the fact that Averroes writes of individual personal moral responsibility and reward and punishment in the next life in his theological writings. In point of fact, however, what has happened in this case is that Gómez Nogales, editor of one of the two editions of the *Short Commentary on the De Anima*, has imposed upon the teachings of the *Long Commentary* something of the doctrine of the *Short Commentary*, together with a partial understanding of the religious writings of Averroes.<sup>204</sup> On his view the *Long Commentary* is replete with aporiai on the issue of the material intellect, and the proper understanding of Averroes requires that he be read as teaching a doctrine of intellect distinct from that of the Latin averroists: "Averroes is not an averroist. If it is true that there were some averroists who admitted the unity of the human intellect, this is not the case for Averroes, who admits the individual immortality of the human soul, even in the material intellect."<sup>205</sup>

It is Gauthier's reliance on this incorrect interpretation of the doctrine of intellect in Averroes' *Long Commentary* that led him to assert that the genuine understanding of Averroes in the *Long Commentary* is that of the pre-1250 "First Averroism" account, according to which the agent and material intellects are multiplied and exist solely "in the soul."<sup>206</sup> Hence, contrary to the view of

203. Gómez Nogales (1976). Much of his account presumes what he argued in Gómez Nogales (1967).

204. "As a good Muslim, Averroes accepts in his theological writings the dogmas proper to human responsibility. He is Sunni in what concerns otherworldly sanctions, which supposes additionally the individual immortality of each human being, and even with a material aspect, because he supposed that all human beings after death take on bodies adapted to the degree of spirituality to which they will have arrived during earthly life." Gómez Nogales (1976), 177. I have argued against this sort of understanding of certain of Averroes' statements in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* in Taylor (1998c). Regarding the meaning of religious statements in Averroes, see Taylor (1998b), (2000b), (2003), and (2007).

205. Gómez Nogales (1976), 177. Also see Gómez Nogales (1978a), where this view is repeated.

206. Another curious example of misunderstanding Averroes is found in Roger Arnaldez's *Averroès. Un rationaliste en Islam*. Arnaldez devotes only a few pages to Averroes' doctrine of the intellect, seemingly ignoring the account of the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*. At the end of his chapter on Averroes as philosopher and theologian, he cites Mahmoud Kassem's reported discovery of a text of Averroes in which the agent and receptive intellect are said to be in one and the same entity. Arnaldez (1998), 173; (2000), 117–118. This text was reported by Kassem in his *thèse de lettres* at the Sorbonne

Gauthier, so-called First Averroism does not in fact well represent the views of Averroes on the intellect. Ironically, it is Second Averroism, as described by Bonaventure, Kilwardby, Aquinas, and others, which rightly represents the actual views of Averroes on the intellect.

Gauthier's thesis that the doctrine of the unicity of the material intellect in Averroes was a product of a misreading of the text of Averroes by the theologians was refuted on the basis of study of the Latin text of the *Long Commentary* by Bernardo C. Bazán, who nevertheless accepted the view of two stages in the understanding of Averroes.<sup>207</sup> In accord with the account of the material intellect I have given above, Bazán argues that the post-1250 view of the theologians is in fact well founded in the philosophical principles and text of Averroes. He rightly holds that First Averroism "might be the fruit of a naive approach and . . . insufficient comprehension" on the part of Latin thinkers of that era.<sup>208</sup> That the earliest Latin readers of Averroes' *Long Commentary* would find it difficult to understand his teaching on the unitary, separate, and shared nature of the material intellect is hardly surprising since, as Averroes himself well knew, this was a novel proposal in solution of very difficult issues of Aristotelian noetics.<sup>209</sup>

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(Paris, 1945), later published in Arabic in 1964 (two of its three sections) and in French (complete) in 1978. See Qasim (1964) and Kassem (1978). In fact, this text is nothing but the *Middle Commentary on the De Anima* in Paris, *hébreu* 1009, Bibliothèque Nationale, one of the manuscripts used by Ivry for his edition.

207. See Bazán (1985) and (1989). Also see Bazán (1972) for his account of the views of Averroes on intellect. There he writes, "Averroes has sought to be strictly faithful to the principles that Aristotle had held with respect to the immaterial separate substances. It led him to a consequence of unexpected scope: the affirmation of the separate and unique character of the two intellectual principles." Bazán (1972), 48.

208. Bazán (1985), 530.

209. See above pp. lxxx–lxxxi. At {409–410} he calls the material intellect "a fourth kind of being" insofar as it is immaterial separate intellect and yet has a sort of potency. This is essential for his solution of epistemological issues and also for his metaphysical account of separate intellects and God, though it is novel in the tradition. At {399} Averroes writes, "Since there are all those things [which can be raised regarding the material intellect], for this reason it seemed [best] to me to write what seemed to me to be the case on this topic. If what appears to me is not complete, it will be a start for a complete account. So I ask my brothers seeing this exposition to write down their doubts and perhaps in that way what is true regarding this will be found out, if I have not yet found [it]. If I have found [it], as I suppose, then it will be clarified through those questions. For truth, as Aristotle says, is fitting and gives testimony to itself in every way." Another interesting issue is that of just how the agent and material intellects were understood by the Latin translator. On his different choices of *intelligentia agens* and *intellectus agens* to translate العقل *al-ʿaql al-faʿāl*, see Book 2, n. 138, and Book 3, n. 43.

According to Bazán, however, what led to the First Averroism account was the preconceived understanding of human nature on the part of early Latin readers of the *Long Commentary*. He writes, "A dualistic conception of human beings explains, in my opinion, why the readers of Averroes were so receptive to his writings and why it took them so long to discover that there was more than what met the eye in the *Long Commentary*."<sup>210</sup>

In an article published in 2002 Bazán persuasively argues for the complete rejection of the conception of the existence of a First Averroism. On the basis of his analyses of early works on philosophical psychology, he concludes that Latin thinkers of what he calls "the eclectic period" often approached the consideration of the soul and its powers with the conviction that the soul was itself an individual substance in its own right, a *hoc aliquid*,<sup>211</sup> and also related to the body as its form. As he sees it, this led to the employment of words and arguments from Averroes in a supplementary way to form a novel understanding of the agent intellect as "a faculty of the soul that is the form of the body." In another article Bazán points out the basis for this as follows:

The theoretical foundation of this thesis is the double consideration of the soul as *forma et hoc aliquid*. Being a substance, the soul must be composed of potential and actual co-principles, to which the Latins linked the receptive and agent intellects. The textual foundation of this doctrine was *De anima* 430a10–14, although some Latin Masters, for dialectical reasons, also appealed to Averroes in its support, quoting him out of context, even if they were aware of the true meaning of his own views. The doctrine is basically an eclectic neoplatonic Aristotelianism. To call it "First Averroism" obscures not only its historical originality, but also its doctrinal meaning.<sup>212</sup>

In his analysis of thirteenth-century commentaries on the *De Anima*, Bazán finds three major categories of classification: the eclectic period; the period of the genuine Averroistic reading, to some degree found in the work of Siger of Brabant; and the period of the post-1250 theologians and the synthesis of Thomas Aquinas. The middle of these periods he characterizes as one in which a genuine attempt was made to provide a consistent account of Aristotle's philosophical psychology of intellect using the work of Aver-

210. Bazán (1989), 20.

211. Bazán (2002), 125ff. Surely this was founded in part if not wholly on religious presuppositions about the nature of human beings as morally responsible agents and as possessing immortal souls. Note that this usage of *hoc aliquid* or *aliquid hoc* as substance in its own right is different from what Averroes appeals to. For Averroes the material intellect is a unique immaterial substance and not a determinate particular as a member of a species. As immaterial, it cannot be multiplied in number.

212. Bazán (2000), 53.

roes.<sup>213</sup> The final period was one of critique of the genuine Averroes and the analyses the *Long Commentary* inspired, culminating in what Bazán calls

the personal synthesis of Thomas Aquinas, who tried to avoid the dangers of anthropological and metaphysical dualism by providing an interpretation that could satisfy at the same time the concerns of the "Eclectic" commentators regarding the incorruptibility of the human soul, and the concerns of the "Averroists" regarding consistency with the principles of hylemorphism. Thomas' interpretation is based on the conception of the human soul as a subsistent-substantial-form, a notion that secures both the unity of the human composite and the incorruptibility of the intellectual soul, and that evolves from the Aristotelian notion of form as actuality, brought to the limits of its ontological possibilities.<sup>214</sup>

As the foregoing makes clear, the historical account of the reception of Averroes' doctrine of the intellect in the thirteenth century is still in the process of being written and rewritten in spite of the many valuable works by scholars of the twentieth century.<sup>215</sup> The same is true for the importance of Averroes

213. Bazán (2002), 122.

214. Ibid. For a broader account of the role of Averroist thought in the thirteenth century, see Van Steenberghen (1966), 357ff., and (1970), 198ff. Bazán's recent essay, "Radical Aristotelianism in the Faculties of Arts. The Case of Siger of Brabant" (2005), and some of his articles cited above are prompting a rethinking among present-day scholars of the part played by the thought of Averroes in the development of philosophy in the thirteenth-century Latin West. Whether there was such a thing as Latin Averroism and just what that term might be meant to denominate is a matter of considerable discussion among some experts in the field. These and related issues are likely to appear as topics in periodicals, conference proceedings, and books in coming years.

215. For example, in 1994 Kuksewicz, a leading scholar in Latin Averroist studies, reasoned that he must revise his view that some authors of late thirteenth-century commentaries should be considered "undercover Averroists." (Cf. Kuksewicz [1968], 98.) He writes, "It seems to me that the interest in Averroes' philosophy, testified in different degrees by several commentaries at the end of the thirteenth century allows me to speak about an *initial phase* of the Averroistic reborn in Paris. This initial phase gave way to different manifestations: Not-Averroistic texts with some positive interest in Averroes' heterodox solutions and nearly clear Averroistic works were among these manifestations as well. Texts of this category were, however, the representation of only two extreme limits of the new current: its main body consists of works of ambivalent character, and I think these texts present no clear solutions, remaining hesitant between orthodox and heterodox theses. This interpretation, which seems historically acceptable, lets me explain and understand the contradictions and the doctrinal inconsistency proper to these works." Kuksewicz (1994) 109. The starting point for understanding the Latin Averroists and their various "Averroisms," however, has to be a sound under-

and his doctrine of the intellect among Renaissance thinkers. Katherine Park writes, "Many of the most important disputed questions in Latin psychology in fact had their roots in the parts of Averroes' *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros* where he pointed out issues on which he thought Aristotle had been incomplete or unclear."<sup>216</sup> This was certainly the case for the doctrine on the intellect in Aristotle, which Averroes in the *Long Commentary* set forth as a philosophical account devoid of explicit religious presuppositions.<sup>217</sup> Renaissance philosophical psychology has been held to take its start at the end of the fourteenth century in Italy, following Pietro d'Abano's move to Padua. According to Eckhard Kessler, "The period's main characteristic was the attempt to synthesize 'radical' naturalistic Aristotelianism, based on Averroes and imported from Paris to Padua by Pietro d'Abano, with the Oxford tradition of logical and mathematical analysis developed by Ockham and his followers. This attempt was accompanied by the humanist polemic against both the 'Averroist dogs' and the *barbari Britanni*, and, as time went on, was more and more censured, until finally suppressed by the church."<sup>218</sup>

This was a renewal of life for Averroist philosophical psychology, though Averroes' *Long Commentary* was continuously discussed and consulted through the entire later medieval period.<sup>219</sup> All the major figures of Renaissance philosophical psychology found in Averroes an approach worthy of consideration and, for many, adoption in one or another form or part. In many cases, the questions and issues as framed by Averroes provided the context for discussion. Paul of Venice (1369/72–1429), Cajetan (1480–1547), and Nicoletto Vernia (d. 1499) drew deeply upon Averroes' doctrine of intellect, adopting parts and rejecting others, while Alessandro Achillini (1463–1512) accepted much of Averroes on intellect. Agostino Nifo (ca. 1470–1538) initially drew upon the work of Siger of Brabant and John of Jandun in the Averroist account he was later to abandon. Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), who was trained in the Averroist tradition, determined that both Aristotle and Averroes had to be rejected as Aquinas had rejected Averroes, since their positions did not allow suffi-

standing of Averroes' thought in relation to that of Aristotle, as de Libera (1994), 76, remarks: "To take a more exact measure of the true philosophical significance of the averroist noetic, it would be opportune to start by reinstalling Ibn Rushd in the long duration of Aristotelianism. It is a task which largely remains to be achieved."

216. Park (1988), 474.

217. "Averroes' theory of the unicity of the intellect, or, more precisely, the unicity of the material intellect, was the most controversial thesis of Arabic philosophy in the Renaissance." Hasse (2004), 131.

218. Kessler (1988), 486.

219. See Wolfson (1961).

ciently for the rational nature of human beings.<sup>220</sup> Pomponazzi also rejected the account of Aquinas that the soul could be shown to be immortal on philosophical grounds insofar as that required the soul be created by God. His own view was close to that of Alexander. "Pomponazzi—referring to the principle that the intellectual soul cannot operate without imagination and is therefore dependent on matter *ut obiecto* (as its object) even if it is independent from it *ut subiecto* (as its subject) in terms of natural philosophy—chose the material solution and maintained that the human soul was the highest material form, attaining in its most elevated operations something beyond materiality."<sup>221</sup> In the end, however, he determined that the issue of the immortality of the human soul was not one which could be settled by analysis on the part of human natural reasoning.

The philosophy of Averroes continued to be read in the Renaissance volumes of the works of Aristotle in which the commentaries of Averroes were also printed.<sup>222</sup> And the *Long Commentary* continued to be consulted, studied, commended, and condemned for its teachings on the intellect by famous scholars such as Elijah Delmedigo (ca. 1460–1493), Jacopo Zabarella (1533–1589), Francisco Suarez (1548–1617), and many more too numerous to mention here. In light of the diverse uses of Averroes by these many thinkers, it perhaps becomes questionable whether the label "Averroism" continues to have descriptive value sufficiently specific to allow for the diverse ways the thought of Averroes was employed in the Renaissance period. When we speak of Renaissance philosophy, just as it is helpful to speak of "Aristotelianisms" rather than to assume a single shared reading of Aristotle,<sup>223</sup> so too the same can be said of the thought of Averroes and the "Averroisms" of varying degrees and sorts it generated.<sup>224</sup>

### The Present Translation

This first complete translation of the *Long Commentary on the De Anima* into a modern Western language is preceded by two incomplete French translations of Book 3<sup>225</sup> and a modern Arabic translation of the entire work.<sup>226</sup> All these

220. Kessler (1988).

221. Kessler (1988), 503.

222. See Cranz (1976) and Schmitt (1979).

223. Mahoney and South (1998).

224. My thanks to James South for suggesting the term "Averroisms."

225. See *Long Commentary. Book 3* (1980–1981, 1982–1983) and *Long Commentary. Book 3* (1998).

226. *Long Commentary Modern Arabic Trans.* (1997). Selections from the *Long Commentary* are also translated into Spanish in Martínez Lorca (2004) and in Puig (2005).

are based on the 1953 edition of Crawford, who provided an austere edition based solely on the evidence of the Latin manuscripts.<sup>227</sup> While Crawford identifies the Text sections of Aristotle with the corresponding Bekker numbers, the edition contains no notes on any of the sources mentioned by Averroes; no indications of any corresponding teachings in related works extant in Arabic, Latin, or Hebrew; no explanations of complicated phraseology or technical terms; no explanations of doctrines; no consideration of differences between the Text of Aristotle embedded in the *Long Commentary* in relation to the Greek of Aristotle as known today; and no consideration of modern literature on Averroes and his philosophical psychology. The present translation in its notes and introduction provides much of what is missing in Crawford. The notes contain the following: (1) identification of Averroes' source references; (2) the extant Arabic fragments as currently available corresponding to the Latin, with English translations where the texts differ substantially; (3) the Arabic of Averroes' citations of his alternate text of the *De Anima*, again with English translations where the texts differ substantially; (4) remarks on significant variations of Averroes' Text of the *De Anima* from the Greek; (5) identification of the passages of the Arabic *Middle Commentary* which are identical to what is found in the *Long Commentary*; and (6) brief explanations of phraseology, technical terms, and complex argumentation. Since I have not undertaken a comprehensive study of the Latin manuscripts, I have seldom strayed from the text of Crawford, though where I have felt compelled to read the text differently, I have done so with indication in the notes. Consideration of the extraordinary influence of the *Long Commentary* in the Latin tradition, as indicated above in this introduction, is beyond the constraints of this book.<sup>228</sup>

This is a translation of Crawford's edition of the medieval Latin text presumed to have been rendered from Arabic into Latin by Michael Scot perhaps around 1220.<sup>229</sup> First evidence of Michael's activity as a translator is with his rendering of al-Bīrūnī's *De motibus caelorum*, dated 1217 at Toledo, where Michael was likely in the company of Archbishop Rodrigo, whom he had

227. *Long Commentary* (1953). I leave out of consideration various very brief extracts of the *Long Commentary* that have been published in English and other languages.

228. Alain de Libera provides impressive analyses and insightful discussions of the arguments of the *Long Commentary* and their influence in his introduction and the substantial notes to his translation of Book 3, Texts and Comments 1–39, in *Long Commentary. Book 3* (1998). In *Long Commentary Modern Arabic Trans.* (1997) Gharbi provides only a short introduction and a table of terms, no notes. In *Long Commentary. Book 3* (1980–1981, 1982–1983) Griffaton provides only notes, with corresponding modern French translations of some of the texts of Aristotle.

229. See the remarks of Gauthier in Thomas Aquinas *Sententia libri De anima* (1984), at \*221a, on the evidence that the *Long Commentary* was in Paris in 1225.

accompanied to the Fourth Lateran Council at Rome in 1215.<sup>230</sup> At Toledo Michael was part of a school of *verbum de verbo* translators patronized by the archbishops of Toledo for well over fifty years.<sup>231</sup> Michael was in Bologna in 1220, and in the following years enjoyed the support of Popes Honorius III and Gregory IX regarding various benefices in England and elsewhere, though he declined elevation to archbishop at Cashel.<sup>232</sup> This favor apparently continued until 1227, when Michael seems to have taken a place at the court of Frederick II, who would remain his patron until Michael's death sometime shortly before 1236.<sup>233</sup> It may be that Michael is the translator of a number of the *Long Commentaries* of Averroes on Aristotle, though only the *Long Commentary on the De Caelo* is thought with some certainty to be his.<sup>234</sup> While no sufficiently comprehensive study of the translation work of Michael has been completed to enable researchers to identify his work by internal criteria,<sup>235</sup> similarities among the Latin versions of the *Long Commentaries* on the *De Caelo*, *De Anima*, *Metaphysics*, and *Physics* may generally support the view that they may have been translated by the same person or group. The *Long Commentary on the De Anima* has but one unequivocal attribution to Michael from among the fifty-seven manuscripts used by Crawford.<sup>236</sup>

Since this is a modern translation of a medieval translation and not a direct rendering from the Arabic, I have chosen a somewhat literal style of translation, reflecting more closely what is supposed to have been written by the Latin translator or team of translators. The *Long Commentary* is a dense, complicated, and highly technical work not meant by Averroes for common consumption by the public but rather one focused on all the technical details of Aristotle's *De Anima* in their deepest meaning and importance. As such, it is far from easy to read and understand in the extant fragments in Arabic and all the more challenging in its Latin translation. Yet its translator or translators and many thinkers of the Latin West did extraordinarily well in grasping the meaning of Averroes' text and in grasping his complex and subtle arguments

230. Burnett (1994), 102. On Michael and Archbishop Rodrigo, see Pick (1998) and (2004). For a brief account of Michael Scot, see Minio-Paluello (1974).

231. Burnett (1997), 66; (1994), 103.

232. Haskins (1927), 274–275.

233. Haskins (1927), 275–276; Thorndike (1965), 32–39.

234. "We infer from the similarity of style and the time of appearance of several of Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle's natural science that they were all translated by one person and that person was Michael Scot. But only one commentary—that on the *De caelo*—has Michael's name as translator firmly attached to it." Burnett (1997), 67. For a list of Latin translations and their possible translators, see Burnett (2005).

235. But see van Oppenraay (1990), Burnett (1997), and Schmiejia (1999).

236. See Crawford's remarks in *Long Commentary* (1953), Prolegomena, xi.

only by intensively poring over the precise language of his *Long Commentary*. The present translation seeks to preserve his arguments as found in the Latin text in their precision and their complexity of phraseology and meaning, though explanatory notes are provided to assist readers. For example, I have frequently chosen to render the Latin *intentio* (for the most part corresponding to Arabic معنى *ma'nâ*) as "intention" rather than "notion," "idea," "form," "meaning," and other possible renderings because of its technical usage in Arabic and Latin philosophy. This is appropriate since the very text of the *Long Commentary* communicated in an important way to the Latin West the multiple meanings of the Arabic as involving at once the senses of form, notion, idea, purpose, and end by the use of *intentio*. This is a technical term whose meaning in English has been split into the usage of two words, "intention" and "intension," both of which derive from the same Latin. The use of "intention" in the present translation, which may appear awkward to the untrained modern ear, even if historically appropriate in English, has the advantage of highlighting what Latin readers and also Averroes understood as a sophisticated and complex philosophical usage.