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XXXIII
COMMENTARIVM MAGNV
IN ARISTOTELIS DE ANIMA LIBROS

IN LINGVAM ANGLICAM VERTIT
PROLEGOMENIS COMMENTARIIS INDICIBVSQVE INSTRVXIT
RICHARD C. TAYLOR
ADIVVANTE THÉRÈSE-ANNE DRVART

*To Timothy Noone
Thérèse Druart*

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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basis of this it seems that this soul is active, not passive. Therefore, inasmuch as the intelligibles move it, it is passive, and inasmuch as they are moved by it, it is active. For this reason Aristotle will say later that it is necessary to assert that these two differences are in the rational soul, namely, the power of activity and the power of affection.²⁵ And he says plainly that each part of it is neither generable nor corruptible, as will be evident later.²⁶ But here he began to make known the substance of this passive power, since this is necessary in the doctrine. On the basis of this, then, it is declared that this difference, namely of affection and reception, exists in the rational power.²⁷

However, that the substance receiving these forms must be neither a body nor a power in a body is evident from the propositions which Aristotle uses in this discussion. One of these is that this substance receives all material forms, something known concerning this intellect. The second is that everything receiving something else must be devoid of the nature of the thing received²⁸ and its substance must not be the same in species as the substance of the thing received. For if the recipient were of the nature of the thing received, then the thing would receive itself and then the mover would be the moved. Thus, it is necessary that the sense receiving color lack color and that receiving sound lack sound. This proposition is necessary and indubitable. From these two [propositions] it follows that this substance which is called the material intellect has none of those material forms in its nature. Because the material forms are either a body or forms in a body, it is evident 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.²⁹ You ought to know that what he set forth is necessarily so, because that is a substance and what is a recipient of the forms

25. 3-5, 430a13-14 [436].

26. "It was necessary that the agent intelligence be separate, unmixed and impassible insofar as it is what makes all forms intelligible. If, therefore, it were mixed, it would not make all forms, just as it was necessary that the material intellect, insofar as it is what receives all forms, also be separate and unmixed. For if it were not separate, it would have this singular form and then necessarily one of two alternatives would come about, either it would receive itself and then the mover in it would be moved, or it would not receive all the species of forms" [441].

27. See n. 14 for a corresponding Arabic fragment.

28. Arabic fragments correspond to Book 3, 4.63-68: «لا جسم ولا قوة في جسم» (Long Commentary Fragments [1985], 44). Note that the Arabic has *قوة* (power) and *لا جسم* (not a body), "nor a power in a body," while the Latin has *neque forma in corpore*, "nor a form in a body," at Book 3, 4.79.

29. Arabic fragments correspond to Book 3, 4.73-80: «هذه لا شك فيها فيلزم من هاتين أن هذا الجوهر الذي يسمى عقلا هيولانيا ليس في طبيعته واحد من الصور الهيولانية فصار إليها لا» (Long Commentary Fragments [1985], 44). It follows Aristotle's lead in passages such as the next Text, *De Anima*, 429a24, τῶν ὄντων.

of material things or material [forms] does not have a material form in itself, namely, [it is not] a [substance] composed of matter and form. Neither is it again one of the material forms, for material forms are not separable. Nor is it again one of the simple first forms, for those are separable, but [the material intellect] does not . . . receive forms unless they are diverse [from its own nature],³⁰ and inasmuch as they are intelligibles in potency, not in act. [The material intellect] is, therefore, a being which is other than form and matter and the composite of these.³¹ But whether this substance has its own form other in being from material forms has not yet been explained from this discussion. For the proposition saying that the recipient ought to be devoid of the nature of the thing received is understood of the nature of the species of that thing received, not of the nature of its genus, especially its remote [genus] and especially for what is said by equivocation. For this reason we said that in the sense of touch there is found a mean between the contraries which it apprehends; for contraries are other than the means in species. Since such is the disposition of the material intellect, namely, that it is one of the beings,³² that it is a separate potency, and it does not have a material form, it is evident that it is not passive (since passive things, namely, changeable things, are as material forms) and that it is simple, as Aristotle says,³³ and separable. In this way Aristotle understood the nature of the material intellect; and later we will speak about his doubts.³⁴ {387}

5. So it will have no nature except this, namely, what is possible. Therefore that part of the soul which is called the intellect (and I call the intellect that

30. Crawford marks this passage as corrupt. An alternative to my conjectural rendering of this corrupt passage might be to understand the passage as asserting that for the forms to be received in the material intellect they must be separable from matter by the power of intellect. Janssens (1998), 722, conjectures the omission of *habet in se naturam materialem, quae non* by homeoteleuton and provides another reading of this entire section. If his conjectured text is correct, my translation would read "but [the material intellect] does not have in itself a material nature which receives forms only if they are diverse [from its own nature], and inasmuch as they are intelligibles in potency, not in act."

31. "One should hold that it is a fourth kind of being" (409).
32. This sort of phrasing is used by al-Fârâbî in his *Letter on the Intellect*. See *ibid.*, 17.9-18.1. It follows Aristotle's lead in passages such as the next Text, *De Anima*, 429a24, τῶν ὄντων.
33. See 405a13-19 [40].
34. See [399ff].

part by which we discern and cogitate³⁵) is not one of the beings in act before it understands. (429a21–24)

After he had explained that the material intellect does not have some form characteristic of material things, he began to define it in the following way. He said it has no nature according to this except the nature of the possibility for receiving intelligible material forms. And he said: **And so it has no nature, etc.** That is, then 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.

Next he said: **and I call the intellect**, etc. That is, and I mean here by intellect the power of the soul which is truly called intellect, not the power which is called intellect in the broad sense in Greek, namely, the imaginative power, but the power by which we discern theoretical things and cogitate concerning things which will come about by our action.³⁶ Next he said: **it is not one of the beings in act before it understands**. That is, 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.

Since that is the definition of the material intellect, it is evident that according to him it differs from prime matter in this respect: it is in potency all the intentions [388] of the universal material forms, while prime matter is in potency all those sensible forms [and is] not something which knows or apprehends [things]. The reason why that nature is something which discerns and knows while prime matter neither knows nor discerns, is because prime matter receives diverse forms, namely, individual and particular forms, while this [nature]³⁷ receives universal forms. From this it is apparent that this nature is not a determinate particular nor a body nor a power in a body. For if it were so, then it would receive forms inasmuch as they are diverse and particular.

35. *Per quod distinguimus et cogitamus*: ὃ διανοεῖται καὶ ὑπολαμβάνει ἡ ψυχή. The Latin here lacks the Greek subject and substitutes for "the soul" the first person plural, "we." The fault may lie in the Greek textual tradition since Averroes' alternate translation also lacks this mention of soul: (وهو) لا معالجة أن عقل النفس المسمى عقلا (وهو) الذي يتفكر به فيرى الرأي آتية) ليس بوجود في شيء من الأشياء بالفعل قبل أن يدرك الشيء بفهمه (Aristotle, *De Anima* [1954]); "So it must be the case that the intellect of the soul called intellect (which is that by which it cogitates so that opinion may be formed regarding anything) is not an existent in act in any of the things before it grasps the thing with its comprehension."

36. Cf. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 89.26–29, 94.27–29; (1996), 112, 118. The corresponding Arabic text is corrupt.

37. The material intellect.

and if it were so, then the forms existing in it would be intelligibles in potency; and thus it would not discern the nature of the forms inasmuch as they are forms, as is the disposition in the case of individual forms, be they spiritual or corporeal. For this reason, if that nature which is called intellect receives forms, it 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. For this reason it is not necessary that it be of the genus of those matters in which the form is included,³⁸ nor that it be prime matter itself. Since if this were so, then the reception in these would be of the same genus; for the diversity of the received nature causes the diversity of the nature of the recipient. This, therefore, moved Aristotle to set forth this nature, which is other than the nature of matter, other than the nature of form, and other than the nature of the composite. (389)

This same consideration brought Theophrastus, Themistius, and several commentators to hold the opinion that the material intellect is a substance which is neither generable nor corruptible.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ This brought them to hold the opinion, as well, that this is the opinion of Aristotle. For that intention, namely, that this intellect is such, is quite apparent to those who regard the demonstration of Aristotle and his words, with reference to the demonstration as we have explained [it] and with reference to [his] words because he said that it is unaffected and he said that it is separable and simple. For these three words are used with regard to it by Aristotle and it is not right—rather it is highly unlikely—for him to use any of

38. That is, it is not a composite form which necessarily has matter included in its definition.

39. Cf. *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1950), 83–84; (1985), 121–122; (1987), 206–207. Avicenna is grouped with these because he holds for the incorruptibility of the material intellect, but Averroes also characterizes him as contradicting himself because he holds that the material intellect comes into being by generation of the individual and then is eternal. On Theophrastus as available to Averroes, see Gutas (1999b). On Averroes and the Greek Commentators, see the introduction pp. lxxix–lxxxix.

Arabic fragments correspond to Book 3, 5.53–59: فهذا هو ، اختلاف طبيعة القابلين ، الذي حرك أرسطو الى ادخال هذه الطبيعة التي هي غير طبيعة الهيولي وغير طبيعة الصورة وغير طبيعة المجموع منها. وهذه هي البراهين التي قادت الى ذلك ولهذا قال انه جوهر غير (Long Commentary Fragments [1985], 44). The fragment does not specify Theophrastus, Themistius, and several commentators" as does the Latin, but rather "These are the demonstrations which force him [Aristotle] to this. On account of this he said that it is a substance neither generated nor corruptible."

40. [387–388].

these [words] in a demonstrative doctrine about something generable and corruptible.

But they later saw Aristotle say that if there is an intellect in potency, there must also be an intellect in act, namely, an agent (it is this which draws out what is in potency from potency into act), and the intellect [must] be drawn out from potency into act (this is what the agent intellect places into the material intellect as artistry places forms pertaining to artistry in the matter of the artisan). Since they saw this later, they held the opinion that this third intellect which the agent intellect places into the recipient material intellect (this is the theoretical intellect) must be eternal. For since the recipient was eternal and the agent eternal, then the product must necessarily be eternal. Because⁴¹ they held this opinion, it happens in reality that [390] it is neither the agent intellect nor the product, since agent and product are understood only with reference to generation in time.⁴² Or it may be said that this "agent" and this "product" are said only by analogy and that the theoretical intellect is nothing but the actuality of the material intellect in virtue of the agent intellect such that the theoretical [intellect] is something composed of the material intellect and the intellect which is in act.⁴³ What seems to be the case, that the agent intellect sometimes understands when it is united to us and sometimes does not un-

41. *Et quia*. The sense requires "while." Perhaps ولاكن corrupted into ولان or was read as such by the translator.

42. "If the world were by itself eternal and existent (not insofar as it is moved, for each movement is composed of parts which are produced), then, indeed, the world would not have an agent at all. But if the meaning of 'eternal' is that it is in everlasting production and that this production has neither beginning nor end, certainly the term 'production' is more truly applied to him who brings about an everlasting production than to him who procures a limited production. In this way the world is God's product and the name 'production' is even more suitable for it than the word 'eternity,' and the philosophers only call the world eternal to safeguard themselves against the word 'product' in the sense of 'a thing produced after a state of non-existence, from something, and in time.'" *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (1930), 162; (1969), 96–97.

43. *Intellectu qui est in actu*. This phrase is used to denote an intellect or power of intellect which is in a state of actuality. As such, it can denote the agent intellect or the acquired intellect. Here I take it to refer to the agent intellect. The phrase *intellectus qui est in actu* occurs only in Book 3, where it is found nine times, here and at [394], [410], [430], [475], [479], [483], and twice at [484]. In its sole appearance in the *De Anima* Text, at Book 3, Text 36 [479], it corresponds to the Greek ὁ νοῦς . . . ὁ κατ' ἐνέργειαν. At [394] it appears in a quotation of the text of Alexander's *De Intellectu*. At [484–485] Averroes identifies "the intellect which is in act" with the acquired intellect. See the introduction pp. xiv–xx, n. 10, and p. xxiv, n. 20; and Book 2, n. 440, regarding the use of *intelligentia agens* and *intellectus agens* to denote the agent intellect. The doctrine Averroes is expounding in the present sentence sounds much like his own doctrine in the *Middle Commentary*.

derstand, results for it because of the mixture, namely, on account of its mixture with the material intellect. From this consideration alone Aristotle was forced to assert [the existence of] the material intellect, not because the theoretical intelligibles are generated and made [to exist].⁴⁴

They confirmed this by the fact that Aristotle insisted that the agent intellect exists for us in the soul, since we seem to strip forms from matter first and then to understand them. To strip them is nothing but to make them intelligibles in act after they were [intelligibles] in potency, to the extent that apprehending them is nothing but receiving them. They saw that this activity of creating and generating intelligibles is due to our will and is able to be augmented in us in accord with the augmentation of the intellect which is in us, namely, the theoretical intellect. And it was already explained that the intellect which creates and generates intelligibles and things understood is the agent intelligence. For this reason they said that the intellect in a positive disposition is that intellect, though sometimes weakness afflicts it and sometimes an addition [accrues to it] because of the mixture. This, therefore, moved Theophrastus, [391] Themistius, and others to hold this opinion about the theoretical intellect and to say that this was the opinion of Aristotle.

The questions on this are not few. The first is that this position contradicts what Aristotle asserted, namely, that the relation of what is understood in act to the material intellect is like the relation of what is sensed to what senses. This contradicts truth in itself. For if conceptualization were eternal, then it would be necessary for what is conceptualized to be eternal. Hence, it would be necessary for the sensible forms to be intelligibles in act outside the soul and not [be] material at all.⁴⁵ But this is contrary to what is found regarding those forms.

See the introduction, pp. xxxv–xlii. Cf. the interpretation of de Libera at *Long Commentary, Book 3* (1998), 193, n. 85.

44. In this context the meaning seems to be that the interaction of the material intellect and the agent intellect is not such that the material intellect by which we know is always in constant reception of intelligibles of material things by way of the "light" of the agent intellect. (At [441] Averroes asserts for himself that the agent intellect understands nothing of things of this material world. For him it is always in act of its own nature and so, in a different sense, always understanding.) Hence, since the material intellect is not always receiving the intelligibles of material things, the cause of the lack of receptivity is not the agent intellect but must have to do with the nature of the material intellect or its reception. The fact of intermittent intellectual receiving indicates that there are two intellects, not the fact that theoretical intelligibles are generated in us. Cf. [450–451]. The reason for the inability of the material intellect to function at all times would be simply because it depends not on the agent intellect alone but also on the internal and external senses to provide intelligibles in potency.

45. Cf. *De Anima* 3.4, 429b27ff., and Book 3, Text and Comment 13 at [427–428].

Aristotle even says plainly in this book that the relation of that rational discerning power to the intentions of the imagined forms is just as the relation of the senses to the things sensed. For this reason the soul understands nothing without the imagination, just as the senses sense nothing without the presence of the sensible. Therefore, if the intentions which the intellect apprehends from the imagined forms were eternal, then the intentions in the imaginative powers would be eternal. And if those were eternal, then the sensations would be eternal, for the sensations are related to this power just as the intentions which can be imagined are related to the rational power. And if the sensations were eternal, then the things sensed would be eternal or the sensations would be intentions other than the intentions of things existing outside the soul in matter. For it is impossible to assert these same intentions to be sometimes eternal and sometimes corruptible, unless it were possible that a corruptible nature be changed and converted into an eternal one. [392] For this reason it is necessary, if those intentions which are in the soul are of generable and corruptible things, that those [intentions] be generable and corruptible. On this there was lengthy discussion elsewhere.⁴⁶

This, therefore, is one of the impossible things which seem to contradict this opinion, namely, this [opinion of Themistius, Theophrastus, and others] which we asserted: that the material intellect is a power which has not come into being. For it is thought impossible to imagine how intelligibles will have come into being while that [power]⁴⁷ will not have come into being. For when the agent is eternal and the patient is eternal, the product must be eternal. Also, if we assert that the product is generated (this is the intellect which is in a positive disposition), how can we say in reference to this that it generates and creates the intelligibles?

The second question is much more difficult.⁴⁸ It is this: if the material intellect is the first actuality of a human being, as it is explained concerning the definition of the soul, and the theoretical intellect is the final actuality, but a human being is generable and corruptible and [yet also] one in number in virtue of his final actuality by the intellect, then it is necessary that he be so in virtue of his own first actuality. That is, [it must be the case] that I be other than you in virtue of the first actuality in reference to intelligibles and you be

46. Averroes discussed this issue at Book 1, Comment 13 [19]. A lengthy discussion is found below in Book 3, Comment 36 [483–486].

47. The material intellect.

48. What is at issue here is whether each person has his or her own material intellect from the start as a rational animal.

Janssens (1998), 723, is likely correct in suggesting one read *impossibilia contingentia* (understanding *sunt* to be suppressed) with manuscripts B and C instead of Crawford's conjectural *contingunt impossibilia*. This does not affect my English translation.

other than I. If not, you would exist in virtue of the being belonging to me and I would exist in virtue of the being belonging to you. Universally a human being would be a being before having existed, and so a human being would not be generable and corruptible inasmuch as he is a human being, but if he were [generable and corruptible], he would be [so] inasmuch as [he is] an animal. For it is thought that just as it is necessary that the final actuality be of this sort if the first actuality will have been a determinate particular and numberable the way individuals are, [393] so too it is necessary for the contrary, namely, that the first actuality be of this sort if the final actuality is numbered in virtue of the numbering of individual human beings.⁴⁹

Many other impossible things result from this position. For if the first actuality were the same for all human beings and [were] not numbered the way these [individuals] are, then it would happen that when I acquire some intelligible, you too would also acquire that same thing, and when I forget some intelligible, you [would] also.

Many other impossible things also result from this position. For it is thought there is no difference between either position insofar as something impossible results, namely, from the fact that we assert that the final [actuality] and the first actuality are of the same sort, namely, [that they are] not numbered the way individuals are. Since we seek to avoid all those impossibilities, we consequently assert that the first actuality is this [particular] intention, namely, [the intention] of an individual human being both generable and corruptible in matter and numbered the way individuals are. [Yet] it was already explained from the demonstration of Aristotle mentioned earlier that [the intellect] is not a determinate particular nor a body nor a power in a body.⁵⁰ How, then, can we escape from this error, or what sort of way is there to solve this question?

Alexander,⁵¹ however, bases his position on this last account and says that

49. De Libera is certainly right to call attention to this text. As it stands in the Latin, it does not make a strong contribution to the argument but merely states that if the first human actuality is individual for each human being, so too the final actuality of knowing is individual for each. But if the final actuality of knowing is individual for each, then the first actuality would be individual for each. This is how I have translated the Latin. I understand Averroes to start here by giving the first of two problematic explanations in relation to individuals. Then he contrasts this with the equally problematic account which would hold that both the first and the final actuality do not belong to human beings as individuals. For his interpretation, de Libera understands *huiusmodi*, "of this sort," to refer ahead to "of the same sort, namely [they are] not numbered the way individuals are." See *Long Commentary*, Book 3 (1998), 62–63 and 196–199.

50. [387–388].

51. Regarding the understanding of Alexander put forth here by Averroes, see the introduction, pp. lxxxi–lxxxiii.

it belongs more to Natural Philosophy, namely, [to] the account which concludes that the material intellect (394) is a generated power such that we understand regarding it the opinion which is held also in regard to the other powers of the soul, that dispositions⁵² come to be in the body per se from mixture and compounding. He says this is not unthinkable, namely, that from a mixture of elements there comes to be such a noble and marvelous thing, though it is far from the substance of the elements because of the great extent of the mixture. He testifies regarding this that it is possible in light of the fact that it appears that the composition which first occurred in elements—the composition of the four simple qualities—even while that composition is small, is the cause of the greatest diversity, inasmuch as one is fire and another is air. Since this is so, it is not implausible that through the multiplicity of composition which is in a human being and in animals, so many diverse powers are made there from the substances of the elements.

He propounded this plainly and in a general way in the beginning of his book *On the Soul*,⁵³ and he enjoined that when considering the soul in the first place one ought to know beforehand the wonders of the composition of the body of a human being. He said also in the treatise which he authored, *On the Intellect According to the Opinion of Aristotle*, that the material intellect is a power made from the compound. These are his words:

"Since, therefore, from this body, when it is mixed in a certain mixture something will be generated from the whole mixture such that it is fit for being an instrument of that intellect which is in this mixed thing, since it exists in all the body, and that instrument is also a body, then it will be called the intellect in potency. It is a power made from a mixture which occurred in bodies, [a power] disposed to receive the intellect which is in act."⁵⁴ [395]

52. The Latin Averroes' *praeparatio* renders استعداد and corresponds to Alexander's ἐπιτηδειότης, "suitability, fitness." See n. 54 and 55 below. Hence, it is a disposition for the reception of forms.

53. Alexander, *De Anima* (1887), 15.26ff.; (1979), 21ff.

54. ὅταν μὲν οὖν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ κραθέντος πῦρ γένηται ἢ τι τοιοῦτον ἐκ τῆς μίξεως, ὡς καὶ ὄργανον δύνασθαι τῷ νῷ τοῦτω παρασχεῖν, ὅς ἐστιν ἐν τῷ μίγματι τοῦτω (διότι ἐστὶν ἐν παντὶ σώματι, σῶμα δὲ καὶ τοῦτο), τοῦτο τὸ ὄργανον δύναται νοῦς λέγεται ἐπιτηδειότης τις δύναμις ἐπὶ τῇ τοιῷδε κράσει τῶν σωμάτων γινόμενη πρὸς τὸ δέξασθαι τὸν ἐνεργεῖα νοῦν (Alexander, *De Intellectu* [1887], 112.11–16). "When, from the body that was blended, there comes to be fire or something of this sort as the result of the mixture, which is able to provide an instrument for this intellect, which is in this mixture—for it is in every body, and this too is a body—then this instrument is said to be intellect potentially, supervening on this sort of blending of bodies as a suitable potentiality for receiving the intellect that is in actuality" (ibid. [2004], 39–40; [1990], 55–56). Regarding the Arabic version, which is available in two editions, Davidson re-

This opinion regarding the substance of the material intellect is extraordinarily distant from the words and demonstration of Aristotle. [It is distant] from his words where he says that the material intellect is separable, that it does not have a corporeal instrument, and that it is simple and impassible, that is, unable to be affected, and where he praises Anaxagoras because he said that it is not mixed with the body. And [it is distant] from demonstration as it is known on the basis of what we have written.

Alexander expounded the demonstration of Aristotle by which he concluded that the material intellect is not passive nor a determinate particular nor a body nor a power in a body, in such a way that [Aristotle] meant that disposition, not the subject of that disposition. For this reason he says in his book *On the Soul* that the material intellect is more likened to the disposition which is in the tablet unwritten upon than to the tablet which has been disposed [with writing]. He says that this disposition can be said truly not to be a determinate particular nor a body nor a power in a body, and that it is not passive.⁵⁵

marks that "neither edition of the Arabic is wholly adequate. I have translated from my own ad hoc eclectic text, which I base on both editions and their apparatuses, with corrections here and there from the Greek." Davidson (1992), 7, n. 2. For the Arabic text, see Alexander, *De Intellectu* (1971), 40.3–7. The text is corrupt in the faulty Jarullah manuscript used as base by Finnegan (1956), 181–199; see esp. 195. Also see Geoffroy (2002). Note that although the Latin might allow "intelligible" for *intellectum* here, it is more reasonable to translate *intellectum* as "intellect," which happens to be in accord with the thought of Alexander as we have it in the Greek and in the extant Arabic: لقبول العقل الذي بالفعل (Alexander, *De Intellectu* [1971], 40.7, and [1956], 195).

55. ἐπιτηδειότης τις ἄρα μόνον ἐστὶν ὁ ὑλικὸς νοῦς πρὸς τὴν τῶν εἰδῶν ὑποδοχὴν εἰκῶς πινακίδι ἀγράφῳ, μᾶλλον δὲ τῷ τῆς πινακίδος ἀγράφῳ, ἀλλ' οὐ τῇ πινακίδι αὐτῇ, αὐτὸ γὰρ τὸ γραμματεῖον ἤδη τι τῶν ὄντων ἐστὶν. διὸ ἡ μὲν ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ ταύτην ἔχον εἴη μᾶλλον <ἄν> κατὰ τὸ γραμματεῖον, τὸ δὲ ἄγραφον ἐν αὐτῇ ὁ νοῦς ὁ ὑλικὸς λεγόμενος, ἢ ἐπιτηδειότης ἢ πρὸς τὸ ἐγγραφῆναι. ὡς οὖν ἐπὶ τοῦ γραμματεῖου τὸ μὲν γραμματεῖον πάσχει <ἄν> ἀντιγραφόμενον, ἐν ᾧ ἢ πρὸς τὸ γραφῆναι ἐπιτηδειότης, ἢ μέντοι ἐπιτηδειότης αὐτὴ οὐδὲν πάσχει εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἀγομένη (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐστὶ τι ὑποκείμενον), οὕτως οὐδ' ἄν ὁ νοῦς πάσχει τι, μηδὲν γε ὦν τῶν ἐνεργειῶν (Alexander, *De Anima* [1887], 84.24–85.5). "We must say, then, that the material intellect is only a kind of propensity suitable for the reception of intelligible forms; it is like a tablet on which nothing has been written, or (to express this better) more like the blank condition of the tablet than the tablet itself, since the writing surface is an existent. Hence the soul, or the subject to which it belongs, might more properly be compared to the writing surface, and the intellect called material likened to the unmarked condition of the page or its suitability for being written on. Using these terms, we can state the analogy thus: As the surface of a tablet in which there inheres a disposition for being written on would be affected if it were inscribed, but the disposition itself would undergo no change by being actualized, since it is not the subject [of the writing]; so the intellect is

But there is nothing to what Alexander said. For this is truly said of every disposition, namely, that it is neither a body nor this [particular] form in a body. Why, then, of [all] the other [sorts of] dispositions did Aristotle select this for the disposition which is in the intellect, if he did not intend to show us the substance of the thing disposed but rather the substance of the disposition? But it is impossible to say that the disposition is a substance, while we say that the subject of that disposition is neither a body nor a power in a body. What Aristotle's demonstration reaches is an intention different from this one according to which it is said that the disposition is neither a body nor a power in a body.

This is evident from the demonstration of Aristotle. {396} For the proposition saying that everything which receives something must not have anything of the nature of the thing received existing in it in act is evident from the fact that the substance and nature of the thing disposed is able to have this aforementioned thing inasmuch as it is disposed. For the disposition is not the recipient but rather the being of the disposition on the part of the recipient is as [the being] of a proper accident. For this reason, when there is a reception, there will not be a disposition [any more] and the recipient will remain [in existence]. This is evident and thought by all the commentators from the demonstration of Aristotle.

For there are four different ways in which something can be said to be neither a body nor a power in a body. The first is as the subject of intelligibles, and this is the material intellect, the nature of whose being has been demonstrated. The second is the disposition itself existing in matters, and this is close to the way in which it is said that privation without qualification is neither a body nor a power in a body. The third is prime matter, the being of which has also been demonstrated. The fourth is the separate forms, the being of which has also been demonstrated. All these are diverse.

This led Alexander to this far-fetched and obviously erroneous explanation, namely, to evade and take refuge from the questions mentioned above.⁵⁶ We also see that Alexander is bolstered by the fact that the first actuality of the intellect ought to be a generated power on the basis of general accounts said in regard to the definition of the soul, namely, because it is the first actuality of a natural organic body. He says that this definition is true of all the parts of the soul with the same intention. And he gives the reason for this: since to say that all the parts of the soul are forms is [to speak] univocally, or nearly so, and because it is impossible for form, inasmuch as it is the end of a thing having

not a subject which is acted upon because it is none of the things which actually exist" (ibid. [1979], 109–110).

56. I follow the suggestion of Janssens (1998), 723, and read *scilicet evadere et fugere* with manuscripts A and C.

{397} a form, to be separate, then since the first actualities of the soul are forms, they must not be separate. By this he refuted [the position] that there is a separate actuality in the first actualities of the soul, as it is said of the sailor and the ship, or generally that there will be some part which is called an actuality with an intention different from the intention with which it is said elsewhere.⁵⁷ What he supposes is evident concerning general accounts in regard to the soul [is something] Aristotle himself clearly said is not evident in regard to all the parts of the soul. For to say *form* and *first actuality* is to speak equivocally about the rational soul and about the other parts of the soul.

Abû Bakr,⁵⁸ however, in the literal understanding of his discussion, seems to intend for the material intellect to be the imaginative power inasmuch as it is disposed so that the intentions which are in it may be intelligibles in act and [so] that there is no other power [which is] the subject for intelligibles other than that power. Abû Bakr, however, seems to intend this in order 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. Since, if it were so, then it would happen either that the being of the forms in the soul would be the being they have outside the soul, and so the soul will not be apprehending [them] or [it would happen] that the intellect would have a corporeal instrument, if the subject for the intelligibles were a power in a body, as is the case for the senses.

57. Averroes remarks at {405} that Alexander has taken the notion that the soul is the first actuality of the natural organic body and applied it to the material intellect. That is, insofar as the material intellect is a first actuality for knowing awaiting actualization by the agent intellect, then it too must be an actuality of parts or powers of a body. Yet the first actualities here are not of the same sort since one is the life of a material body while the other is the receptivity of an immaterial intellect. See the introduction, p. lxxxii.

58. Abubacher: Abû Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Bâjjah. As noted above, in Book 2 and throughout Book 3 with the exception of the two occurrences in this paragraph, the translator has Avempache for Ibn Bâjjah. Referring to the present account, Davidson writes, "Either by reading out the implications of that statement and similar statements of that sort in Ibn Bâjjah or by drawing on sources no longer extant or still undiscovered—as, for example, Ibn Bâjjah's *De anima*, the published text of which breaks off tantalizingly in the middle of the discussion of the intellect—Averroes reports that Ibn Bâjjah construed the material intellect as a disposition located in the imaginative faculty of the soul." Davidson (1992), 261. For what we have of this work, see Ibn Bâjjah, *Book on the Soul* (1960), (1961). For discussion of the position of Ibn Bâjjah, see the introduction, pp. xxv–xxvii and lxxxix–xciii. Albert the Great apparently understood Abubacher in this paragraph to refer to the physician Abû Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Zakarîyah al-Râzî (d. 925), known in Latin as Rhazes. See Albertus Magnus, *De Anima* (1968), III, tr. 1, c. 6, 184B–185B. III. For more texts with this identification by Albert, see Bach (1881), 122–129.

A more unthinkable aspect of the opinion of Alexander is that he said that the first dispositions for the intelligibles and for the other later actualities of the soul are things produced from the mixture, not powers produced by an external mover as is well known of the opinion of Aristotle and all the Peripatetics.⁵⁹ For that opinion regarding the apprehensive powers of the soul, [398] if it is as we have understood it, is false. For from the substance and the nature of the elements there cannot come to be an apprehensive discerning power. For if it were possible that there come to be such powers from their nature and without an external mover, then it would be possible for the final actuality, which is the intelligibles, to be something produced from the substance of their elements, as color and taste come to be. This opinion is similar to the opinion of those who deny agent causes and those who allow only material causes: these are those who speak of chance.⁶⁰ Alexander has greater nobility than to believe this, but the questions which were posed to him regarding the material intellect forced him to this [position].

Let us then return to our [own discussion] and say that perhaps these are the questions that led Ibn Bâjjah to say this regarding the material intellect. But it is evident that what occurs to him is impossible. For the imagined intentions are what move the intellect, not what are moved. For it is explained that they are such that their relation to the discerning rational power is just as the relation of what is sensed to what senses, not as of what senses to the positive disposition which is sensation. If it were what receives the intelligibles, then the thing would receive itself and the mover would be the moved.⁶¹ [But] it was already explained that it is impossible that the material intellect have a form

59. Averroes has in mind Aristotle's famous mention of τὸν νοῦν . . . θύραθεν, reason or intellect which enters human beings from outside, at *Generation of Animals* 2.2, 736b27.

60. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.4, 196b5–6, where Aristotle says, "Others there are who believe that chance is a cause, but that it is inscrutable to human intelligence, as being a divine thing and full of mystery." When Averroes comments on this text of the *Physics*, he may have in mind the Occasionalist view that things do not of themselves have causal natures but depend on God for their existence at every moment. There he remarks that the quiddity of a thing could not be known and that this would be a divine matter (*res divina*). *Long Commentary on the Physics* (1962), 66rA-B. This is in accord with his critique of Occasionalism found in his *Explanation of the Sorts of Proofs in the Doctrines of Religion* (1998), 166; (1947), 291–292; (2001), 83–84.

61. That is, the imagination would be both what gives rise to intelligibles by providing intentions of material things (mover) and what receives intelligibles (moved) if the receptive material intellect is to be identified with the imagination. As indicated in the introduction, pp. xxv–xxvii, Averroes adopted the view of Ibn Bâjjah in his *Short Commentary on the De Anima*.

in act, since its substance and nature is to receive forms inasmuch as they are forms. [399]

All the things which can be said regarding the nature of the material intellect seem to be impossible, except what Aristotle said, to whom also no few questions occur. One concerns the fact that the theoretical intelligibles are eternal. The second is the most formidable of them, namely, that the final actuality of a human being is numbered the way individual human beings are and the first actuality is one in number for all [human beings].⁶² The third is the 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?⁶³

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.⁶⁴

The question addressing how the theoretical intelligibles will be generable and corruptible while their agent and [400] recipient will be eternal and [that of] what the need is for setting forth an agent [intellect] and a recipient intellect if there is not something generated there, this question would not occur if there were not another thing here which is the cause that the theoretical intel-

62. The issue here is that all human beings are from birth rational in definition by species, yet they reach their full actuality of intellect only individually.

63. These issues are raised by Theophrastus in a long text quoted by Themistius. See Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 107.30–108.7; (1973), 195–196; (1996), 133. The Arabic of the account of Theophrastus is translated by Dimitri Gutas in Huby (1999), 120.

64. Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* 1.32, 47a5–6: δεῖ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ ἀληθὲς αὐτὸ ἐαυτῷ ὁμολογούμενον εἶναι πάντη. "For everything that is true must in every respect agree with itself." (ibid. [1984]) بل يوافق نفسه ومتفقا من كل جهة (ibid. [1948]). Cf. Averroes' *Faṣl al-Maqāl* in *Decisive Treatise* (1959), 13: بل يوافق الحق، فان الحق لا يضاد الحق، بل يشهد له. "Truth does not contradict truth but rather is consistent with it and bears witness to it." My translation. For a discussion of this, see Taylor (2000b).

ligibles are generated. Now, however, because those intelligibles are constituted through two things, one generated and the other not generated, what was said regarding this follows naturally. Conceptualizing, as Aristotle says, is just as apprehending by sense. But apprehending by sense is something which is actualized through two subjects, one the subject in virtue of which the sense is⁶⁵ true (this is the 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. This was said by Aristotle regarding this intellect, as will be seen later.⁶⁶

This intellect's subject, which is its mover in some way, is what Ibn Bājja held to be the recipient, because he found it sometimes to be intellect in potency and sometimes to be intellect in act—that is, the disposition of a recipient subject—and he thought the converse [as well].⁶⁷ (401) That proportionality is found to be more exact between the subject of vision which moves [vision] and the subject of the intellect which moves [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. For this reason Aristotle had to posit the agent intellect, as will be seen later.⁶⁸ It is this which draws out these intentions from potency into act. Therefore, just as color which is in potency is not the first actuality of the color which is the apprehended intention but rather the subject actualized through that color is vision, so too the subject

65. Crawford lists no variants for *fit* ("comes to be"). The sense of the argument which follows indicates the likelihood that this was originally *sit* ("is"). For my translation I read this as *sit*.

66. See [409–412]. On this topic see the insightful remarks of Michael Blaustein (1984), 63ff. Also see Blaustein (1986). The notion of the intelligibles being true in virtue of a subject external to the soul is discussed in the *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1985), 116–117 and (1987), 203–204; and the notion of the subject by which the intelligibles exist as such is mentioned at (1985), 125 and (1987), 210. Ibn Bājja is inspirational for this. See Ibn Bājja, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), 35–36 Spanish, 33–35; (1968), 163–164; (1981), 188.

67. The text is problematic here and far from clear. See Janssens (1998), 724.

68. 430a10ff. Book 3, Text and Comment 17 [436ff].

actualized through the thing understood is not the imagined intentions which are intelligibles in potency, but rather the material intellect, which is actualized through the intelligibles. And so it is + that the relation of [the material intellect] to [the intelligibles] + is as the relation of the intention of color to the power of vision.⁶⁹

Since all those things are as we recounted, it happens that those intelligibles which are in act, namely, the theoretical [intelligibles], are generable and corruptible only in virtue of the subject in virtue of which they are true, not in virtue of the subject in virtue of which they are one of the beings, namely, the material intellect.⁷⁰

The second question, how the material intellect is one in number in all individual human beings, neither generable nor corruptible, and the intelligibles [are] existing in it in act (this is the theoretical intellect), [yet it is also] enumerated in virtue of the numbering of individual human beings, generable (402) and corruptible through generation and corruption of individuals, this question is very difficult and has the greatest ambiguity.

For if we hold that this material intellect is enumerated through the numbering of individual human beings, it will happen that it is a determinate particular or a body or a power in a body. When it is a determinate particular, it will be an intention intelligible in potency. But an intention intelligible in potency is the subject moving the recipient intellect, not the subject moved. Therefore, if the recipient subject is held to be a determinate particular, it will happen that the thing receives itself, as we said,⁷¹ which is impossible.

Also, if we concede that it receives itself, it would happen that it would receive itself insofar as it is different. Thus, the power of the intellect will be the same as the power of sense, or there will be no difference between the being of a form outside the soul and [the being of one] in the soul.⁷² For this indi-

69. Crawford marks this passage as corrupt. What one would expect here is rather that the relation of the material intellect to the intelligibles is as the relation of the power of vision to the intention of color.

70. That is, here intelligibles exist as intelligibles in act only in the material intellect. If it were not for intellect, the intentions would remain at the level of intelligibles in potency, that is, at the level of imagination or at the level of forms in things, both of which are corruptible particulars.

71. [385], [398].

72. That is, intellect's power for receiving forms will be just as sense's power for receiving forms—namely, that an intention different in being is received in the sense in the actuality of the sense from the sensed object. If such were not the case and the being of the form in the sensed object were the same as the being in the soul, then they would not differ in being at all. Clearly this latter cannot be so. But neither can it be the case that intellect receives the forms just as sense does, since sense receives them in

vidual matter receives the forms only as these [determinate particular forms] and individual [forms]. This is one of the things which attest that Aristotle holds this intellect not to be an individual intention.⁷³

If we hold that it is not enumerated through the numbering of individuals it will happen that its relation to all the individuals existing in their final actuality in generation is the same. Hence, if any of those individuals acquired some intelligible, then that intelligible must be acquired by all of them. Consider whether the conjoining of those individuals is owing to the conjoining of the material intellect with them. Now, the conjoining of a human being with a sensible intention is owing to the conjoining of the first actuality (403) of sense with one who is receptive of the sensible intention. But the conjoining of the material intellect with all human beings existing in act in their final actuality at some time ought to be the same conjoining; for there is nothing to cause difference in the relation of conjoining between these two conjoinings. If this is so, I say, then when you have acquired some intelligible, it is necessary that I also would acquire that intelligible, which is impossible.

It makes no difference whether you hold that the final actuality generated in any individual is made the subject for that intellect, namely, [the actuality] in virtue of which the material intellect is united [to individuals] and [hold that] it is from this [actuality] as a form separable from its subject with which it is conjoined, if there is such a thing, or whether you hold that this actuality is one of the powers of the soul or [one] of the powers of the body, [still] the same impossible consequences result.

For this reason one should hold the opinion that if there are some living things whose first actuality is a substance separate from its subjects, as is thought concerning the celestial bodies,⁷⁴ it is impossible that there be found

their determinate particularity and individuality while intellect receives forms as intelligibles in act, which allows for the aspect of universality which makes science possible.

73. That is, the material intellect cannot be a determinate particular as an individual being because it would then have to receive things as particular individuals receive them—that is, in accord with its own individuality and not in accord with the universality which knowledge requires. In that case, they would become intelligibles in potency, not in act. This understanding is central to Averroes' teaching that there cannot be a plurality of material intellects—that is, that it is not possible for each human being to have his or her own material or possible intellect as Avicenna held.

74. "And generally, since it is clear that the activity of this body is eternal, it is also clear concerning the nature of its form that it does not subsist in a subject and that its subject is simple, not composed of matter and form, for if the latter were the case, the celestial body would be generated and corruptible." *De Substantia Orbis* (1980), 72. As Geoffroy makes clear, analogy with the celestial bodies and souls is central to Averroes'

more than one individual from one species of these. For, if among these, namely, from the same species, we find more than one individual, for instance, with regard to a body moved by the same mover, then the being of these [others] would be useless and superfluous, since the motion of these [bodies] would be owing to an intention which is the same in number.⁷⁵ For example, for there to be more than one ship in number for one sailor at the same time is useless; and similarly for there to be more than one tool in number of the [very] same kind of tools for one artisan is useless.⁷⁶

This is the intention of what was said in the first book of *On the Heavens and the World*,⁷⁷ namely, that if there were another world, there would be another celestial body. If there were another celestial body, then it would have a mover different [404] in number from the mover of this celestial body. And if this were so, then the mover of the celestial body would be material and numbered in virtue of the numbering of the celestial bodies, namely, because it is impossible that a mover singular in number belong to two bodies different in number. For this reason the artisan does not use more than one instrument since only a unique activity results from it. 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.⁷⁸ Ibn Bājja already listed most of these in his short work, which he called *The Conjoining of the Intellect with Human Beings*.⁷⁹ Since this is so, how then is there a way to solve this difficult question?

Let us say, then, that it is evident that a human being is intelligent in act only

nature doctrine of the material intellect. See Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 48–51, 68–69; 361. Also see the introduction, pp. xlvff.

75. The argument here is that a plurality of celestial souls of the same species causing the one movement of a single celestial body would be superfluous since only one soul is required. For Averroes the distinct celestial movements are indicative of distinct intentions in distinct celestial souls which receive those intentions from contemplation of distinct separate intellects. Regarding the celestial bodies, souls, and intellects, see Endress (1995) and Twetten (1995).

See n. 78 below.

76. That is, it is useless for the artisan to have multiple copies of the same tool at hand since he can use only one when in the very actuality of exercising his skills.

77. *De Caelo* 1.8–9. He probably has specifically in mind the discussion at 1.8, 2728–13, though the argument here goes well beyond that text. See his comments on this text in his *Long Commentary on the De Caelo* (2003), 164–165 where he discusses conceptualization on the part of the movers of the heavens.

78. That is, if the same applies analogically to Averroes' doctrine of the intellect, then the intellect in a positive disposition would be one, not many.

79. Ibn Bājja, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), 14–16; Spanish, 31–35 (1968), 161–164; (1981), 186–189.

owing to the conjoining of the intelligible with him in act. It is also evident that matter and form are united to one another in such a way that the composite of these is a singular thing, and [this is likewise so] to the greatest extent [in the case of] the material intellect and the intention which is intelligible in act. For what is composed from these is not some third thing different from these as it is for other things composed of matter and form. Therefore, it is impossible for there to be a conjoining of the intelligible with human beings except through the conjoining of each of those two parts with [human beings], namely, of the part which is related to one as matter and of the part which is related to another as form.⁸⁰

Since it was explained among the doubts mentioned earlier that it is impossible for the intelligible to be united with each human being and be numbered in virtue of the numbering of these by way of the part which belongs to it as matter, namely, the material intellect, (405) then it remains that the conjoining of intelligibles with us human beings is through the conjoining of the intelligible intention with us (these are the imagined intentions), namely, of the part which is related to it in us in some way as form. For this reason the statement that a boy is intelligent in potency can be understood in two ways, one because the imagined forms which are in him are intelligible in potency, the second because the material intellect which is naturally constituted to receive the intelligible of that imagined form is receptive in potency and conjoined with us in potency.⁸¹

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.⁸² For this reason Aristotle said in regard to the definition of the soul that it is the first actuality of a natural organized body, because it was not not evident whether the body is actualized through all the powers in the same way or [whether] there is some [power] among these in virtue of which the body is not actualized, and if [that other power] is actualized, it will be in another way.

However, the disposition for intelligibles which is in the imaginative power is similar to the dispositions which are in the other powers of the soul, namely [similar] to the first actualities of the other powers, inasmuch as each of these

80. That is, the material intellect and the agent intellect. Note that I remove Crawford's insertion of *scilicet intellecto*.

81. That is, the boy is intelligent in potency in virtue of (a) the imagined intentions in him which are intelligible in potency, and (b) the material intellect that is in potency with respect to those imagined intentions which are able to become intelligible in act when they come to exist in the material intellect.

82. Cf. (396–397).

two [sorts of] dispositions 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;⁸³ 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.⁸⁴

Owing to this similarity between these two dispositions, Ibn Bâjjah thought that there is no disposition for the thing coming to be understood except the disposition existing in the imagined intentions. But 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.

For this reason one should hold the opinion, which already was apparent to us from the account of Aristotle, that in the soul there are two parts belonging to the intellect, one is the recipient whose being is explained here, the other is the agent which is what makes the intentions which are in the imaginative power to be movers of the material intellect in act after they were movers in potency, as will be apparent later from the account of Aristotle.⁸⁵ [Also from Aristotle it is apparent] that these two parts are neither generable nor corruptible and that the agent is related to the recipient as form to matter, as will be explained afterwards.⁸⁶

For this reason Themistius held the opinion that we are the agent intellect and that the theoretical intellect is nothing else but just the conjoining of the agent intellect with the material intellect.⁸⁷ It is not as he thought. Rather, one

83. "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.

84. The intentions imagined there constitute an active predisposition insofar as they are intelligible in potency, while in other parts of the soul there are first actualities which are predispositions for receptivity.

85. (438–439).

86. (409ff).

87. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* 100.16–21; (1973), 182.1–7; (1996), 124–125. "We, then, are either the potential intellect or the actual [intellect]. So if, in the case of everything that is combined from what is potential and actual, something (*to tode*) and what it is to be something (*to tôide einai*) are distinct, then the I (*to egô*) and what it is to be me (*to emoi einai*) will also be distinct, and while I am the intellect combined from the potential and the actual [intellects], what it is to be me comes from the actual [intellect]. Thus while the intellect combined from the potential and the actual [intellects] is writing what I am [now] discursively thinking about and composing, it is writing not *qua* potential but *qua* actual [intellect], for the activity from the [potential intellect] is channelled to it." Todd also translated this text in *ibid.* (1990), 93–94. Note that Todd changed

should hold the opinion that there are three parts of the intellect in the soul: one is the receptive intellect, the second is that which makes [things], and the third is the product [of these]. 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.⁸⁸

On the basis of this account we have held the opinion that the material intellect is one for all human beings and also (407) on the basis of this we have held the opinion that the human species is eternal, as was explained in other places.⁸⁹ The material intellect must not be devoid of the natural principles common to the whole human species, namely, the primary propositions and singular conceptions common to all [human beings]. For these intelligibles are unique according to the recipient and many according to the intention received.⁹⁰

his mind regarding the referent of αὐτῷ in τὸ γὰρ ἐνεργεῖ ἐκείθεν αὐτῷ ἐποχῆται. In the 1990 translation Todd understood the referent to be the actual intellect, while in the 1996 translation he understood the referent to be the potential intellect. This revision seems to be correct since Themistius is speaking of the activity of the composite human being, which, while traced to the actual intellect, is existing in the composite only via the actual intellect's actualization in the potential intellect.

88. The agent intellect and the material intellect are eternal. The theoretical intellect is eternal insofar as the theoretical intelligibles are in the material intellect and generable and corruptible insofar as the theoretical intelligibles are in human individual knowers for Averroes.

89. Averroes may be referring to *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*, where he speaks of the possibility of the material intellect being "a substance one in number for all human beings in itself, but many by accident, which is not the case for material forms." Gendroy and Steel (2001), 210. Also see *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), 1487–1491 (1962), 302I–303D; (1984), 103–105. In his *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander*, Averroes sets forth his doctrine that العقل الهولائي هو قوة واحدة مشتركة للنفوس الشخصية ("the material intellect is one power shared by individual souls") and that the theoretical intelligibles are فاسدة ولا فاسدة غير كائنة ولا فاسدة ("in its essence ungenerable and incorruptible"). *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander* (2001), 29. On Averroes' position in this work also see Davidson (1992), 293–295. Davidson suggests as relevant *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (1930), 180; (1969), 108.

90. For Averroes here the intelligibles are described as the same but received individually into differing individuals. The common conceptions and first principles of understanding here seem to be the first principles of demonstration—that is, such as that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time in the same respect—attained via sense perception. Averroes' understanding of these seems to follow the accounts of al-Fārābī and Avicenna, who hold that these are communicated to all human beings by the separate agent intellect. This terminology and this understanding of primary or first intelligibles are dependent on the thought of al-Fārābī. In *The Perfect State*, al-Fārābī speaks of first intelligibles and the voluntary intelligibles which can be brought about

Therefore, according to the way by which they are unique, they are necessarily eternal, since being does not desert the subject received, namely, the mover which is the intention of the imagined forms,⁹¹ and for this there is no impediment on the part of the recipient. Therefore, generation and corruption belong to these only owing to the multiplicity accruing to them, not owing to the way by which they are unique. For this reason, since in relation to some individual, one of the first intelligibles is corrupted through the corruption of the subject insofar as it is united with us and true, it is necessary that this intelligible not be without qualification corruptible but [rather be] corruptible in relation to any given individual. In this way we can say that the theoretical intellect is one in all [human beings].

Since consideration is given to those intelligibles insofar as they are simply beings, not with reference to some individual, and insofar as they are not sometimes understood and sometimes not, but rather always [understood], they are truly said to be eternal. It is as if that being is intermediate for them between being which perishes and being which persists.⁹² For according to the multiplicity and diminution accruing to them from final actuality [in indi-

91. The presence of the first intelligibles in man is his first perfection, but these intelligibles are supplied to him only in order to be used by him to reach his ultimate perfection (i.e. felicity). Al-Fārābī, *Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* (1943), 204–205. See Druart (1997a). The same sort of description of the primary propositions is given by Avicenna at Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Nafs* (1959), 49; (1972), 96–97. Also see Averroes' *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1950), 79.15–16; (1985), 115.13–14; (1987), 202, where he writes of المعقولات التي لا ندري متى حصلت، ولا كيف حصلت, "the intelligibles which are such that we do not know when they arose nor how they arose." Later, at 497–497f, Averroes distinguishes between these first principles of the understanding, which he calls natural intelligibles, and voluntary intelligibles. Also see [506].

92. The words *cum esse non fugiat a subiecto recepto, scilicet motore, qui est intentio for-
sationum ymaginatarum* ("since being does not desert the subject received, namely, the mover which is the intention of the imagined forms") are far from clear. What it is precisely to which "the subject received" corresponds is problematic. Averroes has already established the necessity of the material intellect's eternal existence and set forth his view that the human species is eternal. His point may be that the subject into which the intentions are received as intelligible in act always exists as knower and so the mover, "the intention of the imagined forms," must always exist. He draws the consequences of this in the following paragraphs, where he asserts that human beings will always exist to provide intentions for the material intellect.

93. Cf. Averroes' *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander* (2001), 29–30, where he writes that وجودها كأنه وجود متوسط بين الوجود الشخصي والوجود مفارقة, "their existence is as an existence intermediate between individual existence and the existence which is a separate form absolutely."

vidual human beings] they are generable and corruptible, while insofar as they are unique in number [in the material intellect] they are eternal.

This will be the case if it is not asserted that the disposition in regard to the final actuality in human beings is just as the disposition in regard to [the] intelligibles common to all [human beings], namely, that worldly being is not devoid of such individual being.⁹³ For that this is impossible is not evident. Rather, one saying this can have a reason sufficient and able to quiet the soul. For since it is the case that wisdom exists in some way proper to human beings just as it is the case that [various] kinds of arts exist in ways proper to human beings, it is thought that it is impossible that the whole habitable world shun philosophy, just as one should hold the opinion that it is impossible for [the whole habitable world] to shun the natural arts. For if some part of [the habitable world], for example, the northern quarter of the earth, were to be devoid of them, namely, the arts, the other quarters will not be devoid of them, because it was explained that habitation⁹⁴ is possible in the southern as in the northern quarters. Perhaps, then, philosophy is found in the greater part of the subject⁹⁵ in every era, as a human being is found [to come about] from a human being and a horse from a horse.⁹⁶ The theoretical intellect, therefore, is neither generable nor corruptible in this way. And generally it is for the agent intellect creating the intelligibles just as [it is] for the discerning recipient intellect. It is insofar as the agent intellect never rests from generating and creating without

93. Intelligibles are able to be present in members of the human species, though they exist independent of any perishable individual and are unchanging. As is evident in what follows, Averroes is here asserting that there will always exist at every time one or more individual human beings supplying intentions which are intelligibles in potency for the material intellect. The same teaching is found in *Epistle 1 On Connection*, where he asserts that it is not necessary that each and every human being have intellectual knowledge but only that it be manifested in the species. See Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 218.

94. That is, human habitation and the consequent presence of the natural arts can be found in the southern part as well as in the northern.

95. As de Libera notes in his preface to *Long Commentary Fragments* (2001, at 13, n. 2), it is evident that the Latin translator read the Arabic موضع as *mauidi* (subject, *mauidi*) instead of *maudi* (place). Hence, the sense in the Arabic is that philosophy is found in most places. In this de Libera is following the remarks of Janssens (1998), 721.

96. That is, philosophy exists in every age as a human activity. Even if it seems to be hardly evident in some societies and eras, still it is an endeavor which is generated and passed on inevitably by individual human beings, just as humans generate humans and horses horses. This is because of the eternal nature of intellectual activity in the material intellect.

qualification, even if some subject is removed from this, namely, from generation, so it is concerning the discerning intellect.⁹⁷

Aristotle indicates this in the beginning of this book when he says: **And conceptualizing⁹⁸ and contemplating are diverse, such that something else undergoes corruption internally, but it in itself does not suffer corruption.**⁹⁹ He means by **something else** human imagined forms. He means by **conceptualizing** [409] the reception which is always [existent] in the material intellect. Concerning this he intended to raise doubts in this passage and in that other, when he said: **We do not remember because that is not passive; the passive intellect, however, is corruptible and without this it understands nothing.**¹⁰⁰ He means by **the passive intellect** the imaginative power, as he will later explain.¹⁰¹ And generally that notion appeared from extrinsic considerations, namely, that soul—the theoretical intellect—is immortal.

97. That is, strictly speaking, the agent intellect is distinct and continues to carry out its activity. And similarly, the material intellect is a being in its own right and distinct from transient individuals: it does not cease to exist when one or another individual perishes.

98. *Formare per intellectum*: At Book 1, Text 66 [88], the corresponding term is instead *condigere*. The corresponding Greek there is καὶ τὸ νοεῖν δὴ καὶ τὸ θεωρεῖν (408b24).

99. **To understand and to contemplate are distinguished when something else inside undergoes corruption, but it is in itself [89] affected by nothing.** Book 1, Text 66 [88–89] (408b24–25). Note that “it,” *ipsum*, is neuter nominative and must refer to the activity of intellect. Crawford lists no variants for this difficult reading. See Book 1, § 352, regarding the mistranslation of this text.

100. Note the difference between the Latin here and the Latin at Book 3, Text 20. Here we have: *Et non sumus memores, quia iste est non passivus; intellectus autem passivus est corruptibilis, et absque hoc nichil intelligit*. Later we read: *Et non rememoratur, quia iste est non passibilis, et intellectus passibilis est corruptibilis, et sine hoc nichil intelligitur*. “We do not remember, because that is not passible, while the passible intellect is corruptible, and without this nothing is understood.” Book 3, Text 20 [443] (430a24–25). This difference is likely due to the understanding of the translator, which is more subtle in the later text.

101. Aristotle’s remarks at Book 3, Text 20 (430a24–25), that “the passible intellect is corruptible and without this nothing is understood” [443] are interpreted by Averroes as referring to “the forms of the imagination insofar as the cogitative power proper to human beings acts upon them.” [449] This power is “a kind of reason,” *aliqua ratio* [449], thanks only to its connection to the material intellect. But it is a kind of reason which abound up with the body for Averroes, a “particular material power,” *virtus particularis materialis* [476]. Thomas Aquinas follows Averroes in calling this “cogitative power” (*cogitativa*) “the passive intellect” (*intellectus passivus*) and “particular reason” (*ratio particularis*) and describes this bodily power as “what gathers particular intentions”

Hence, Plato said that the universals are neither generable nor corruptible and that they exist outside the mind. The account is true in this way [what was just explained] and false with respect to the intent of his words. This latter is the sense which Aristotle worked to refute in the *Metaphysics*.¹⁰² Generally that intention in reference to the soul is the part which is true in the probable propositions which attribute to soul both kinds of being, namely, mortal and non-mortal. For it is impossible for probable things to be completely false. The ancients recounted this and all the religious laws alike reflect it.

The third question (how the material intellect is a being and [yet] is not one of the material forms nor even prime matter) is resolved in this way. 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. This is [something] necessarily present in every separate intelligence which understands something else.¹⁰⁴ And if not, then there would be no multiplicity [410] in separate forms.¹⁰⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶ Its being is its quiddity. Other

(*quae est collativa intentionum particularium*). Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* (1996), q. 13 resp., 118.266–267.

102. *Metaphysics* 1.9, 990a32ff.

103. Cf. *Epistle 1 On Conjunction* in Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 214, 270. In his n. 61, Geoffroy cites Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 8, 1047b3–5, and Averroes' *Commentary* on that passage indicating the meaning that what is possible must necessarily be realized at some time. His reference is to *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), 1139–1140.

104. That is, this division of what is analogous to form and what is analogous to matter, or of act and potency, must be present in any separate intellect which is capable of knowing anything outside itself. For insofar as it is an intelligence with itself as its object, it need have no potency. But insofar as it is in potency for knowing something other than its own essence or nature, it must have a certain materiality or potency for receiving form which contains essentially a reference to something outside the nature of that particular intelligence, namely, God. The exception among the separate substances or intelligences is God, who, in thinking the highest being, thinks nothing outside himself.

105. That is, there will not be a plurality of separate forms or intellects.

106. The "separate forms" to which he refers here are the separate intelligences. The "First Form" is God for Averroes. Averroes holds that the separate substances or intelligences are distinguished from one another in virtue of their potency for knowledge, a certain equivocal "materiality" found in each which is sufficient to allow their distinction from one another and to make reasonable the assertion that there is a multiplicity of separate substances. This doctrine is also found in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*. "The difference between the First's understanding of Itself and the understanding of

things, however, are in some way different in quiddity and being.¹⁰⁷ 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.¹⁰⁸

This was unknown to many modern [thinkers] to the extent that they denied what Aristotle says, in the Eleventh Book of *First Philosophy*, that the separate forms moving the bodies must be in accord with the number of celestial bodies.¹⁰⁹ To this extent knowledge of the soul is necessary for knowledge of *First Philosophy*. That receptive intellect must understand the intellect which is in act. For while it understands material forms, it is even more befitting that it

understand 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 regard 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." *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (1930), 104 (1969), 122. My translation. Cf. *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), 1696–1697; 1961, c. 51, 335H; (1984), 192–193, where Averroes follows Aristotle in stressing that what requires something other than itself is less than the most excellent of all entities. In his *Short Commentary on the De Anima* in the context of his summary of the views of Ibn Bajjah he writes that "The First Intellect is the most simple of all the intellects and neither is it caused at all nor does It conceptualize (ولا يتصور) anything external to Its own essence." *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1950), 93; (1985), omitted; (1987), 218–219, My translation.

107. *Essentia eius est quidditas eius; alie autem forme diversantur in quidditate et essentia per alio modo*. With the First Form (الصورة الأولى) as its probable antecedent, this is in all likelihood وجودها فهو ماهيتها. Cf. [422], where Averroes is concerned to assert the simplicity of all immaterial substances and there states that "in simple beings the quiddity and being are the same." As indicated in n. 128 below, in the corresponding passage of the *Middle Commentary* (2002), 113.17, Averroes asserts that إن الأشياء البسيطة الوجود والماهية فيها هو شيء واحد بعينه; "the existence and essence of simple things are one and the same."

108. In this, then, lies the reason why the study of the soul is more worthy and more noble than other studies and why it should precede others: we understand the nature of intellect first through understanding the nature of intellect in ourselves, and only when something of that understanding has been achieved can there be any understanding of intellect in higher beings. See Book 1, Text 1 (402a1–4) [3], with n. 11 there also, and the introduction, pp. liiff.

109. *Metaphysics* 12. 8, 1073a26–38. Book 11 in Averroes corresponds to Book 12 because Book 11 of the *Metaphysics* was not available to Averroes.

understand immaterial forms. What it understands of separate forms, for example, of the agent intelligence, does not impede it from understanding material forms.

The proposition saying that the recipient ought to have in act nothing of what it receives is not said without qualification but conditionally. [This is] because 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, as we said earlier.¹¹⁰ Rather, you ought to know that the relation of the agent intellect to that intellect [is the same as] the relation of light to the transparent [medium], and 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 material intellect is united with us¹¹¹ insofar as it is actualized through the agent intellect, we then are united with the agent intellect. This disposition is called acquisition and the acquired intellect,¹¹² as we will see later.¹¹³ That way in which we posited the being of the material intellect solves all the questions resulting from our holding that the intellect is one and many. For 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.¹¹⁴ Thus, it

110. {385–386}.

111. I read *copulatus nobiscum* with manuscripts A and C, following Janssens (1997: 724).

112. *Adeptio et intellectus adeptus*.

113. See [445], but especially the extended discussion of the thought of Alexander of Aphrodisias on this at [482–485].

114. That is, if there is a unity in species but the object in the intellect is different in each individual, then an infinite regress would arise insofar as the object understood in any one mind would have a higher unity which yet again when understood would be grasped differently by different individuals, and so forth. It is better, then, to say

will be impossible for a student to learn from a teacher unless the knowledge which is in the teacher is a power generating and creating the knowledge which is in the student, in the way in which one fire generates another [412] fire similar to it in species, which is impossible. That what is known is the same in the teacher and the student in this way caused Plato to believe that learning is recollection. 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.

The way Ibn Bājja thought to solve the questions arising from the fact that the intellect is one or many, namely, the way which he gave in his treatise entitled *The Conjoining of the Intellect with Human Beings*, is not a way fit for resolving that question. For the intellect which he demonstrated in that treatise to be one, when he worked to resolve that question, is different from the intellect which he demonstrates there also to be many, since the intellect which he demonstrated to be one is the agent intellect inasmuch as it is necessarily a form of the theoretical intellect. But the intellect which he demonstrated to be many is the theoretical intellect itself. This name, however, namely, “intellect,” is said equivocally of the theoretical and the agent [intellects].¹¹⁵

For this reason, if that which is understood concerning this word “intellect” in two opposed accounts—namely, concluding that the intellect is many and concluding that the intellect is one—is an intention which is not equivocal, then what he gave later in regard to this—that the agent intellect is one and the theoretical is many—does not resolve this question. If [413] what is understood in these two opposite accounts concerning this word intellect is an equivocal intention, then the problem will be sophistical, not subject to argument. For this reason we should believe that the questions which that man raised in that treatise are resolved only in this way, if those problems are not sophistical but subject to argument. In this way the question regarding what he was uncertain about concerning the material intellect—whether it is external or united—is resolved. Since this has been explained, let us return to the exposition of Aristotle’s account.

6. For this reason it must not be mixed with the body. For if it were mixed with the body, then it would be in some disposition, either hot or cold, or it

that each individual mind grasps the same intelligible thing. This argument is from Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 104.2–14; (1973), 189.2–15; (1996), 129. But another source is Ibn Bājja, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), section 8; 14–15; Spanish, 32–33; (1968), 162–163; (1981), 187.

115. Ibn Bājja, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), 13–14; Spanish, 30–32; (1968), 162; (1981), 187.

the reason for this is because the intelligible of what does not have matter exists always and in act, while the intelligible of what has matter is in potency.

Next he said: **These, therefore, do not have intellect**, etc. That is, those intelligibles, then, on account of this, namely, because they are intelligible in potency, do not have intellect. For intellect is not ascribed in reference to them but in reference to the form of those as separate from matter. For this reason those forms in relation to these [material things] will not be intelligible in act, that is, will not be apprehended by these [material things] nor will they be [actually] understanding in virtue of these [material things]. In relation to what separates them from their matters they will be intelligible in act and in virtue of these [intellect] will be understanding and in virtue of that same intention those will not be understanding. This is the conclusion of the account resolving the question mentioned earlier. For that account forced us to one of two alternatives: on the one hand, if intellect were identical with the intelligible in the material intellect, [then it would be the case] that other things which are outside the soul would have understanding; on the other hand, if [the intellect] is different [from the intelligible in the material intellect, then it would be the case] that it is intelligible in virtue of an intention in it, [and] hence it will require [another] intellect in order to be thought, and this proceeds in infinite regress.¹⁶⁹ (436)

The resolution of this question, therefore, lies in the fact that the intention in virtue of which the material intellect comes to be intellect in act exists such that it is intelligible in act. But the intention in virtue of which the things which are outside the soul are beings is such that they are intelligible in potency, and if they were [intelligible] in act, then they would [themselves] have understanding.

17. And because, just as in nature there is something in every genus which is matter (and this is what is all those things in potency) and something else which is a cause and agent (and this is that on account of which it brings about anything, as the disposition of artistry to matter), these differences must exist in the soul. (3.5, 430a10–14)

After he had explained the nature of the intellect which is in potency and [the nature of the intellect] which is in act and had given the difference between it and the power of the imagination, he began to explain that it is necessary for there to be a third kind of intellect, namely, the agent intellect.

169. That is, if the objects thought (the things outside the soul) are identical with thought, then each would be thinking. And if they are not identical but rather are different, then the only way thought can be thought is in virtue of another higher intellect. But an infinite regress is generated if in that intellect what is thought and what thinks are different.

intellect¹⁷⁰ which makes the intellect which is in potency to be intellect in act. And he said that the assertion that the agent intelligence is in this genus of beings is just as the disposition [found] in all natural beings. Just as it is necessary in any genus of natural and generable things that there be three things from the nature of that genus and ascribed to it, namely, the agent, the patient, and the product, so ought it to be in the case of the intellect. And he said: **And because, just as in nature**, etc. That is, and because this is just as it is the case in natural things. That is to say, and because the consideration of the soul is a consideration of what is natural, because the soul is one of the natural beings, while it is common to natural beings that they have [437] matter in any genus (namely, what is in potency all the things which are in that genus), and [that they have something else] which is a cause and agent (this is that on account of which everything which is of that genus is generated, as the artistry is to the matter), then it is necessary that there be these three differences in the soul.

18. It is necessary, therefore, that in [the soul] there be the intellect which is intellect insofar as it is made everything, and the intellect which is intellect insofar as it makes it understand everything, and the intellect insofar as it understands everything, as a positive disposition, which is like light.¹⁷¹ For light in a way also makes colors which are in potency to be colors in act. (430a14–17)

170. Note that Averroes' understanding here seems to be influenced by the faulty Text A which follows below. As indicated in the introduction, pp. xix–xx, n. 10, the terms *intellectus* and *intellectus* translate one Arabic word, *العقل*, so any distinction is from the mind of the Latin translator. See the introduction, n. 209; Book 2, n. 138; and Book 3, n. 43.

171. This account of three intellects is absent from the Greek text of Aristotle and absent from Averroes' alternate translation. It is also not mentioned by Averroes in the corresponding passage in his *Middle Commentary*. See *Middle Commentary* (2002), 116. The Greek text has καὶ ἔστιν ὁ μὲν τοιοῦτος νοῦς τῷ πάντα γίνεσθαι, ὁ δὲ τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν ὡς ἔστι τις, οἷον τὸ φῶς. "And in fact thought, as we have described it, is what it is by virtue of becoming all things, while there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things: this is a sort of positive state like light." Aristotle, *De Anima* (1984). The Hebrew (ibid. [1994]) corresponds well with the Greek and thereby reveals that Averroes' primary translation is faulty here. The text seems to have suffered two corruptions, something verified by consultation of the Hebrew translation, which is from the same tradition as the Arabic translation. First, consider "and the intellect insofar as it understands everything, as a positive disposition, which is like light," for the Latin *et intellectus secundum quod intelligit omne, quasi habitus, qui est quasi lux*. The Latin *intelligit* likely renders the Arabic *يعقل*, a corruption of *يفعل*, "makes," corresponding to the Greek *ποιεῖν*, "making." Second, what was perhaps a marginal gloss on the originally sound version of this text may have been moved from the margin into the text—namely, the phrase, "and the intellect which is intellect insofar as it makes

Since those three differences must be found in the part of the soul which is called intellect, it is necessary that there be in it a part which is called intellect insofar as it is made everything by way of likeness and reception. There must also be in it a second part which is called intellect insofar as it makes that intellect which is in potency to understand everything in act. For the reason why it makes the intellect which is in potency to understand all things in act is nothing other than that it is in act; for this fact, that it is in act, is the cause that it understands all things in act. And there must also be in it a third part which is called intellect insofar as it makes every intelligible in potency to be an intelligible in act. He said: **It is necessary, therefore**, etc. He means by that the material intellect. This, therefore, is his description mentioned earlier.¹⁷² Next he said: **and the intellect insofar as it makes it understand everything**. He means (438) by that what comes to be, which is in a positive disposition. This [latter] pronoun can be understood to refer to the material intellect, as we said, and can be understood to refer to the human being who is the one understanding. It is necessary to add in the account: insofar as it makes it understand everything in its own right and when it wishes.¹⁷³ For this is the definition of a positive disposition, namely, that what has a positive disposition understands in virtue of what is proper to itself in its own right and when it wishes, without it being the case that it needs something external in this. Next he said: **and the intellect insofar as it understands**, etc. He means by that the agent intelligence. When he said this: **it understands everything**, as a certain positive disposition, he means that it makes everything intelligible in potency to be intelligible in act after it was in potency, as a positive disposition and form. Next he said: **like light**, etc. 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 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. For if it were so, then

it understand everything," et intellectus qui est intellectus secundum quod facit ipsum intellegere omne. See Taylor (1999a). Cf. Davidson (1992), 317, n. 10.

172. [387].

173. Cf. [220ff], [439–440], [495–496], [499].

there would be no difference between the universal and the individual, and then the intellect would be of the genus of the imaginative power. 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.

Because this intention, which forces the assertion of an agent intellect different from the material intellect and different from the forms of things which the material intellect apprehends, is similar to the intention on account of which sight needs light, in view of the fact that the agent and the recipient are different from light, he was content to make this way known by means of this example. It is as if he says: and the way which forced us to suppose the agent intellect is the same as the way on account of which sight needs 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 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.¹⁷⁴ 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. 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,¹⁷⁵ we said that this must be

174. That is, the agent intellect.

175. *Idem transferri in suo esse de ordine in ordinem*. Averroes surely has in mind al-Fārābī's explanation in his *Letter on the Intellect*: وإذا حصلت معقولات بالفعل فليس وجودها من حيث هي معقولات بالفعل هو وجودها من حيث هي صور في مواد وجودها في نفسها، ليس هو وجودها من حيث هي معقولات بالفعل؛ "But when they become intelligibles in actuality, then their existence, insofar as they are intelligibles in actuality, is not the same as their existence insofar as they are forms in matters. And their existence in themselves [as forms in matters] is not the same as their existence insofar as they are intelligibles in actuality." Al-Fārābī, *Letter on the Intellect* (1983), 16; (1973), 216; (1974), 98. A description of this transference of intelligibles from potency to act is given in al-Fārābī's *The Perfect State*, where he writes, "Neither in the rational power nor in what nature gives (اعطى) is there something sufficient to become by itself an intellect in actuality. Rather, to become an intellect in actuality it needs something else to transfer (ينقلها) from potentiality to actuality. However, it becomes an intellect in actuality

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.

We found that we act in virtue of these two powers of intellect [440] when we wish; and nothing acts except through its form; [so] for this reason it was necessary to ascribe to us these two powers of the intellect. The intellect which is responsible for abstracting and creating the intelligible necessarily precedes in us the intellect which is to receive it. Alexander says that it is more correct to describe the intellect which is in us through its agent power, not through the patient [power], since affection and reception are common to the intellect, the senses, and discerning powers, while activity is proper to [intellect]. It is better that the thing be described through its activity.¹⁷⁶ I say: this would be necessary in every way only if this name affection were said in a univocal way in regard to these, but in fact it is said only equivocally.

All the things said by Aristotle in regard to this are so that the universals have no being outside the soul, [for that sort of separate being] is what Plato intended. For if it were so, then there would be no need to assert the agent intellect.

19. And that intellect is also separate, unmixed, and impassible, and in its substance it is activity. For the agent is always more noble than the patient

when the intelligibles arise in it. The intelligibles which are in potentiality become intelligibles in actuality when they come to be understood by the intellect in actuality. But they need something else to transfer them from potentiality to make them come to be in actuality. The agent which transfers them from potentiality to actuality is a certain essence the substance of which is a certain intellect in actuality and separate from matter. For this intellect gives the material intellect which is in potentiality an intellect something like light." Al-Fārābī, *Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* (1985), 198–200. Translation substantially modified. Cf. *The Political Regime*, where al-Fārābī writes that the agent intellect "makes (يَجْعَلُ) the things which are not in their essences intelligible to be intelligible." It raises (يرفعها) things which are not per se intelligibles to a rank of existence higher than they possess 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-Fārābī, *The Political Regime* (1964), 34–35.

176. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.1, 193b7–8. I am grateful to my Marquette University colleague Owen Goldin for help with this reference to Aristotle's *Physics*. Regarding Alexander, see Alexander, *De Intellectu* (1887), 111.8–15; (1990), 53–54; (2004), 35–36. At 112.4 he writes, ἵδιον γὰρ τοῦ νοῦ το ποιητικόν. "For being productive is peculiar to intellect, and its thinking is being active, not being affected" ([2004], 38; [1990], 55). My emphasis. خاصة العقل انه فاعل ([1971], 39.12; [1956], 195.3); "It is characteristic of the intellect that it is active [or: agent]." I am also grateful to Victor Caston for his suggestions regarding the reference of this comment by Averroes.

and the principle more noble than the matter. And knowledge in act is the same as the thing [known]. (430a17–20)

After he had explained the second kind of being of the intellect, this is the agent [intellect], he began to make a comparison between it and the material [intellect]. He said: **And that intellect is also**, etc. That is, and that intellect is also separate, as is the material [intellect], and it is also impassible and unmixed, as that. 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. If, therefore, it were mixed, it would not make all forms, just as it was necessary that the material intellect, insofar as it is what receives all forms, also be separate and unmixed. For if it were not separate, it would have this singular form and then necessarily one of two alternatives would come about: either it would receive itself and then the mover in it would be moved, or it would not receive all the species of forms. Likewise, if the agent intelligence were mixed with matter, then it would be necessary either that it understand and create itself or that it not create all forms. What, therefore, is the difference between these two demonstrations when they are considered in reference to these [two intellects]? For they are altogether similar. The marvel is how they all concede this demonstration to be true with reference to the agent intellect and then do not agree in regard to the demonstration in reference to the material intellect, although [the demonstrations] are also altogether similar, such that it is necessary to concede one when conceding the other. We can know that the material intellect ought to be unmixed from its judgment and apprehension. For because we judge in virtue of it things infinite in number in a universal proposition—and it is evident that the judging powers of the soul, namely, mixed individual [powers], judge only finite intentions—according to the conversion of the opposite the consequence is that what does not judge finite intentions necessarily is not a mixed power of the soul. And when we have joined to this that the material intellect judges things infinite and not acquired by sense and that it does not judge finite intentions, the consequence is that it is an unmixed power. [442] Ibn Bājjah, however, seems to concede this proposition to be true in his *Letter of Farewell*,¹⁷⁷ namely, that the power in virtue of which we judge with a universal judgment is infinite. But he thought this power to be the agent intel-

177. Ibn Bājjah, *Letter of Farewell* (1943), 36.11–12, Spanish, 80; (1968), 138.

lect, according to the evidence of his account there. Yet it is not so, for judgment and discernment in us are ascribed only to the material intellect. Avicenna certainly used this proposition, and it is true in its own right.¹⁷⁸ After he had made it known that the agent intellect is different from the material [intellect] in that the agent [intellect] is always pure activity while the material is both¹⁷⁹ on account of the things which are here, he then gave the final cause for this. He said: **For the agent is always more noble than the patient.** That is, the former is always activity in its substance, while the latter is found in each disposition. It was already explained that the relation of the agent intellect to the patient intellect¹⁸⁰ is just as the relation of the moving principle in some way to the moved matter. The agent, however, is more noble than the patient and the principle [more noble] than the matter. For this reason it should be held according to Aristotle that the last of the separate intellects¹⁸¹ in the hierarchy is that material intellect. For its activity is less [immaterial] than the activity of those [other separate intellects], since its activity seems more to be affection rather than activity, not because there is something else in virtue of which that intellect differs from the agent intellect other than this intention alone.¹⁸² For just as we know the plurality of separate intellects only through the diversity of their activities, so too we know the diversity of that material intellect from the agent intellect only in virtue of the diversity of their activities. And just as it happens for the agent intellect that sometimes it acts on things existing here and sometimes not, so too it happens for [the material intellect] that sometimes it judges things existing here and sometimes {443} it does not. But they differ only in that the judgment is something in the category of the actuality of the judge, while the activity is not in that way in the category of the perfection of the agent. Therefore consider this: there is a difference between these two intellects and unless there were, there would be no divergence between them. Oh, Alexander, if this term *material intellect* had signified for Aristotle only the disposition alone, how would he make the comparison between it and the agent intellect, namely, in giving these [characteristics] which they have in common and these in which they differ? Next he said: **And knowledge in act is the same thing as the thing [known].** He indicates, as I figure, something

178. See Ibn Sînâ, *Kitâb al-Nafs* (1959), 206ff.; (1968), 76ff. Averroes also discusses material intellect and universal judgments in his *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (1930), 579; (1969), 358, as noted in Davidson (1992), 254.

179. That is, it is both activity and passivity or actuality and potentiality.

180. That is, the material intellect.

181. Instead of *intellectus*, I read *intellectuum* with manuscript C, following Davidson (1992), 292, n. 151.

182. That is, they are intellect but differ by way of this intention of receptivity in knowing present in material intellect.

proper to the agent intellect in which it differs from the material [intellect], namely, that knowledge in act in the agent intelligence is the same as what is known, and it is not so in the material intellect, since its intelligible is the things which are not intellects in themselves. After he had made it known that its substance is its activity, he gave the reason for this. He said:

20. **And what is in potency is prior in time in an individual, while in general it is not [prior] even in time. Nor does it sometimes understand and sometimes not understand. And when it is separate, it is what it is alone and that alone is eternally immortal. We do not remember, because that is not possible,¹⁸³ while the passible intellect¹⁸⁴ is corruptible, and without this nothing is understood.** (430a20–25)

That section can be understood in three ways: (1) according to the opinion of Alexander, (2) according to the opinion {444} of Themistius and the other commentators, and (3) according to the opinion which we have reported (and this one is the more obvious according to the words).

(1) For it can be understood according to Alexander that [Aristotle] meant by “intellect in potency” the disposition existing in the human compound, because the potency and disposition which is in a human being for receiving the intelligible with respect to any given individual is prior in time to the agent intellect. The agent intellect, however, is prior without qualification. When he said: **Nor is it sometimes understanding and sometimes not**, he means the agent intellect. 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 we understand in virtue of it. For someone can say that when we have thought in virtue of something eternal, it is necessary that we understand in virtue of that after death as before. He said in response that this intellect is united with us only in virtue of the mediation of the material intellect [which is] generable and corruptible in us; and when that intellect has been corrupted in us, we will also not remember. Perhaps, then, Alexander expounded this section in this way, although we have not seen his exposition on this passage.

(2) Themistius,¹⁸⁵ however, understands by “the intellect which is in potency”

183. *Non passibilis*: ἀπαθές.

184. *Passibilis*: ὁ δὲ παθητικὸς νοῦς.

185. The account which follows is based on Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 98–99; (1973), 169–181; (1996), 122–124.

the separate material intellect, whose being was demonstrated. And he intends by the intellect [445] with which he made the comparison with this agent intellect insofar as it is conjoined with the intellect which is in potency. This is in fact the theoretical intellect according to him. And when [Aristotle] said: **Nor does it sometimes understand and sometimes not**, he understands the agent intellect insofar as it is not in contact with 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), namely, when he said: **We do not remember**. For he said that it is highly unusual that this doubt on the part of Aristotle would concern the intellect except insofar as the agent intellect is a form for us. For he says that for one asserting the agent intellect to be eternal and the theoretical intellect not to be eternal, this question, namely, why we do not remember after death what we understand in life, does not arise. It is as he said, for to pose that question about the agent intellect insofar as it is acquired, as Alexander said, is highly unlikely. For the knowledge existing in us in the state of acquisition is predicated equivocally in reference to the knowledge existing through nature and instruction. That question, therefore, as it appears, is only in reference to knowledge existing through nature. For it is impossible for that question to arise except in reference to eternal knowledge existing in us either through nature, as Themistius says, or through an intelligible acquired afterward.¹⁸⁶ Because this question in the view of Themistius concerns the theoretical intellect and the beginning of Aristotle's account concerns the agent intellect, for this reason he held that the theoretical intellect is the agent [intellect] according to Aristotle insofar as it is in contact with the material intellect. [446] He attests to all those things on the basis of what [Aristotle] said in the first treatise concerning the theoretical intellect. For there he posed the same question as here and he resolved it by the same solution. For he said in the beginning of that book: **The intellect, however, seems to be a substance existing in reality and not to be corrupted**. For **if it were corrupted, then this would rather be with the weariness of old age**.¹⁸⁷ Later on he provided the way on the basis of which

186. *In postremo*. That is, as coming about in us afterwards in time.

187. **Intellect, however, seems to be a substance which comes to be in a thing and is not subject to corruption**. For if it were subject to corruption, it would be more appropriate for it to undergo corruption in the feebleness which accompanies old age. (408b18–20), Book 1, Text 65 [87]. From consideration of the Latin Text it would appear that the translator did not bother to go back to find the text and to make this translation consistent with what he did earlier. But perhaps Averroes did not bother to coordinate the statements precisely.

it is possible for the intellect to be incorruptible but understanding in virtue of it to be corruptible, and he said: **Conceptualizing and contemplating** are diverse in such a way that **something else is corrupted inside, but in itself it has no failing**. Discernment and love are not the being of that, but rather of that to which this belongs, insofar as it belongs to it. **And for this reason, when that is corrupted, we will not remember nor will we love**.¹⁸⁸ Themistius, therefore, says that [Aristotle's] account in that treatise in which [Aristotle] said, **The intellect, however, seems to be a substance existing in reality and not to be corrupted**, is the same as that in which he said this: **And when it is separate, it is only what it is**, not mortal, eternal. And what he said here: **And we do not remember, because that is not passible, while the passible intellect is corruptible, and without this nothing is understood**, is the same as what he said there, namely: **Conceptualizing and contemplating are distinguished**, etc. He says this on account of the fact that he meant here by **passible intellect** the concupiscible part of the soul. For that part seems to have some [share in] reason, for it listens to what the rational soul considers.

(3) Since, however, we have seen the opinions of Alexander and Themistius to be impossible and have found the words of Aristotle evident according to our [447] exposition, we believe that this is Aristotle's opinion which we voiced and that it is true in its own right. That, however, his words are clear in this section will be explained as follows. For when he said: **And that intellect is also separate, unmixed, and impassible**, he speaks of the agent intellect, and we cannot say otherwise. This word, **also**, indicates another intellect to be impassible and unmixed. Likewise, it is evident that the comparison among these is between the agent intellect and the material intellect, insofar as the material intellect has something in common with the agent [intellect] in many of those dispositions. And in this Themistius agrees with us and Alexander differs.

When he said: **And what is in potency is prior in time to the individual**, it can be understood in the same way for the three opinions. For according to our opinion and [that] of Themistius, the intellect which is in potency is conjoined with us before the agent intellect.¹⁸⁹ And according to Alexander the

188. Book 1 [88–89]: **To understand and to contemplate** (*intelligere et considerare*) are distinguished when something else inside undergoes corruption, but it is in itself affected by nothing. Discerning, loving, and hating are not the being of the [intellect] but rather of this [whole human being], namely, what has [them] insofar as it has [them]. Furthermore, for this reason, when this is corrupted, we will not remember or love others. (408b24–25)

189. Cf. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 95.9–10; (1996), 119: "Now this potential intellect comes into existence even among infants."

intellect which is in potency will be prior in us in being or generation, not according to conjoining. When he said: **while in general it is not [so] even in time**, he speaks about the intellect which is in potency. For when it is taken without qualification, not with respect to the individual, then it will not be prior to the agent intellect in any kind of priority, but posterior to it in all ways. That account agrees with each opinion, namely, the one saying that the intellect which is in potency is generable or [the one saying it is] not generable.

When he said: **And it is not sometimes understanding and sometimes not understanding**, it is impossible for that account to be understood according to its literal meaning, neither according to Themistius nor according to Alexander. For this phrase, **it is**,¹⁹⁰ when [448] he said: **And it is not sometimes understanding and sometimes not understanding**, refers according to them to the agent intellect. But Themistius, as we said, holds that the agent intellect is the theoretical [intellect], insofar as it is in contact with the material intellect. Alexander, however, holds that the intellect which is in a positive disposition (this is the theoretical [intellect]) is different from the agent intellect. And it is necessary to believe this, for the artistry is different from the artistic product and the agent different from [its] act. But insofar as it appeared to us, that account is in accord with its literal meaning and that phrase **it is** will be related to the nearest referent, which is the material intellect when it has been taken without qualification, not with reference to an individual. For it does not occur for the intellect which is called material, according to what we have said, that sometimes it understands and sometimes it does not, except in regard to the forms of the imagination existing in each individual, not with regard to the species. For instance, it does not occur for it that sometimes it understands the intelligible of horse and sometimes it does not, except with regard to Socrates and Plato. But without qualification and with regard to the species, it always understands this universal, unless the human species be altogether defunct, which is impossible. According to this the account will be according to its literal meaning. And when he said: **while in general it is not [so] even in time**, etc., he meant that when the intellect which is in potency is not received in reference to some individual, but is taken without qualification and in regard to any given individual, then it will not be found sometimes understanding and sometimes not, but will be found always understanding. Just as when the agent intellect is not taken in reference to some individual, then it will not be found sometimes understanding and sometimes not understanding, but will be found always to understand when it is taken without qualification; for the mode in [449] the activity of the two intellects is the same. According to this, when he said: **And when it is separate, it is only what it is**,

190. The Arabic is likely هو, "it," without an expressed verb, something which made it difficult for the translator to render the text literally.

not mortal, he meant: and when it is separate in this way, in this way alone is it not mortal, not insofar as it is taken in reference to the individual. His account in which he said: **and we do not remember**, etc., will be in accord with his literal meaning. For contrary to this opinion there ultimately arises a question. For one asking will say: Since the common intelligibles are not generable or corruptible in this way, why do we not remember after death any of the knowledge had in this life? It will be said to resolve this: because remembrance comes about by virtue of passible apprehensive powers, namely, material [powers]. There are three powers, the being of which was explained in *Sense and Sensibilia*, namely, the imaginative, the cogitative, and the memorative. For those three powers are in human beings for presenting the form of a thing imagined when the sense is not present. For this reason it was said there that when those three powers assist each other, perhaps they will represent the individual nature of the thing insofar as it is in its being, even though we may not sense it.¹⁹¹ He meant here by **passible intellect** the forms of the imagination insofar as the cogitative power proper to human beings acts upon them. For that power is a kind of reason¹⁹² and its activity is nothing but the placing of the intention of the form imagined in its individuality¹⁹³ in memory or the discerning of it from [the individual] in conception¹⁹⁴ and imagination. And it is evident that the intellect which is called material receives the imagined intentions after this discernment. That passible intellect, therefore, is necessary for conceptualization. He, therefore, rightly said: **And we do not remember, because that is not passible, while the passible intellect is corruptible, and without this nothing** understands. That is, and [450] without the imaginative power and the cogitative [power] the intellect which is called material understands nothing. For these powers are, as it were, things which prepare artistry's matter for receiving the activity of artistry. This, therefore, is one exposition.

It can be expounded in another way, and it is this: when he said: **And it is not sometimes understanding and sometimes not understanding**, he meant: when it has not been taken insofar as it understands and is informed by generable and corruptible material forms, but has been taken without qualification and insofar as it understands separate forms freed from matter, then it will not be found sometimes understanding and sometimes not understanding, but it will be found in the same form. For instance, [it will be found] in the way in virtue of which it

191. Cf. *Short Commentary on the Parva Naturalia* (1949), 54ff.; (1961), 25ff.; (1972), 40ff.

192. Themistius mentions that imagination can be called intellect in a way at Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 89.27–29 and 94.27–29; (1973), 157; (1996), 112 and 118. Cf. Book 3, n. 98.

193. Literally, with its individual.

194. *Formationem*. Conceptualization, properly so called, can take place only by intellect, so here Averroes is indicating the activity of imagination or cogitation together with the material intellect.

understands the agent intellect, whose relation to it is, as we said, like that of light to the transparent. For it should be held that when it was explained that this intellect which is in potency is eternal and that it is naturally constituted to be actualized through material forms, it is [even] more fitting that it be naturally constituted to be actualized through non-material forms which are intelligible in themselves. But in the beginning it is not conjoined with us in this way but rather later on when the generation of the intellect which is in a positive disposition is actualized, as we will explain later. According to this exposition, when he said: **And when it is separate, it is only what it is**, not mortal, he indicated the material intellect insofar as it is actualized through the agent intellect, when it has been united with us in this way, then it will be separated. Perhaps he indicated the material intellect in its first conjoining with us, namely, [in] the conjoining which is through nature. He specified it through this word only in indicating the corruption of the intellect which is in a positive disposition in the way it is corruptible. And 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.¹⁹⁵ How well does Alexander liken that to fire! For fire is naturally constituted to transform every body through a power existing in it, but nevertheless in the course of this it is affected in a certain way by what it transforms and is assimilated to that in some way, that is, it acquires

195. Cf. Book 3, n. 44. I am in agreement with Davidson (1992), 292, 293, 332–333, that Averroes holds for the existence of two distinct intellects. Still, the account in the *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* is sufficiently equivocal to leave some doubt for its readers. See *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), 1489–1490; (1962), 302M–303D; (1984), 104–105. Cf. Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 108.32–34; (1973), 198.2–4; (1996), 134: “and that another [intellect] is like a combination from the potential and actual [intellects], which they posit as separate from the body, imperishable, and uncreated. These intellects are natures that in different ways are one as well as two, for what [is combined] from matter and form is one.” Also cf. *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), 1489; (1962), 302M–303D; (1984), 104: “but most commentators think that the material intellect survives and that the separate active intellect is like the form in the material intellect, as happens in the compound of matter and form, and that it is that which creates the intelligibles in a way and receives them in another way. I mean it makes them as form and receives them as material intellect.” In what follows this passage of the *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* Averroes goes on to explain that highest human happiness would be attained when the material intellect is fully actualized by the agent intellect.

from it a form less fiery than the fiery form which causes the transforming. For this disposition is precisely similar to the disposition of the agent intellect with the passible [intellect] and with the intelligibles which it generates, for it makes these in one way and receives them in another way. And in accord with this will be the account in which he said: **And we do not remember**, etc. [This is] the solution of the question which made the ancient commentators believe the intellect which is in a positive disposition to be eternal and which made Alexander hold that the material intellect is generable and corruptible. In regard to this question it was said: How are the things understood by us not eternal, while the intellect is eternal and the recipient is eternal? It is as if he says in response that the reason for this is that the material intellect understands nothing without the passible intellect, although there is an agent and there is a recipient, just as there is no apprehending of color, although there is light and there is sight, unless there is some colored thing. Then, according to whichever of those expositions it may be said, the letter [of the text] will agree with the words of Aristotle and his demonstrations without any contradiction or departure from his literal account. For this reason it is not right to use in the doctrine concerning equivocal words (452) except for these which, although they are diverse, nevertheless agree in all the intentions regarding which they can be said. He shows that he meant here by **passible intellect** the human imaginative power because of what lies in the other translation in place of what he said: **because that is not passible, while the passible intellect is corruptible**. For he says in the other translation: “And what brought us to say that this intellect is not transformed or affected is that opinion¹⁹⁶ belongs to the passible intellect and that it is corruptible, and does not apprehend the intelligible and nothing understands without imagination.”¹⁹⁷ This term **intellect**, therefore, is accordingly said in this book in four ways. For it is said of the material intellect, of the intellect which is in a positive disposition, of the agent intellect, and of the imaginative power.

You ought to know that there is no difference between the exposition of Themistius and the other ancient commentators and the opinion of Plato in regard to the fact that the intelligibles existing in us are eternal and that learn-

196. *Existimatio*: التوهم. The translator should have rendered this as *ymaginatio*, “imagination,” as he does at the end of this quotation. But perhaps his Arabic manuscript was faulty and had الوهم.

197. (والذى دعانا الآن <إلى أن> قلنا إن هذا العقل لا يستحيل ولا يآلم أن التوهم هو. Aristotle, *De Anima* [1954], 75); “What led us to our having said that this intellect is not passible and not undergoing affection is that the opining faculty is the intellect undergoing affection. The intellect does not apprehend nor does it understand anything without the opining faculty.” This is an addition to the text of Aristotle not found in the Greek. In spite of the use of التوهم here, Averroes understands this to denote the imagination.

ing is recollection. But Plato says that those intelligibles sometimes are in us and sometimes are not, owing to the fact that the subject is sometimes prepared for receiving them and sometimes not. They exist in themselves in this way before we receive them as well as after; and thus they are outside the soul as well as in the soul. Themistius, however, says that this, namely, that they are sometimes united and sometimes not, occurs for them due to the nature of the recipient. For he holds that the agent intellect is not naturally constituted to be conjoined with us at first except insofar as it is in contact with the material intellect. And this declination occurs for it in this way, since the conjoining with the intentions of the imagination is in one way a reception, as it were, and in another way an activity, as it were. For this reason the intelligibles are in [the material intellect] in a disposition diverse from their being in the agent intellect. Assurance [453] in regard to understanding this opinion is [found in the fact] that the reason moving Aristotle to propose the existence of the material intellect is not because here there is a produced intelligible. Rather, the reason for this is either because when there were found the intelligibles which are in us according to dispositions not in accord with the simple intelligibles, then it was said that this intellect which is in us is composed of what is in act, namely, the agent intellect, and of what is in potency. Or [it is] because the conjoining of this according to this opinion is similar to generation and is, as it were, likened to agent and patient, namely, in its conjoining with intentions of imagination. According to this opinion, therefore, the agent, the patient, and the product will be the same and it was said from those three dispositions in virtue of the diversity which occurs for it. We, however, hold that nothing moves him to impose the agent intellect except that the theoretical intelligibles are generated in the way which we said.

Therefore consider this: there is difference among the three opinions, namely, that of Plato, that of Themistius, and our opinion. According to the exposition of Themistius in regard to those intelligibles there is need only to assert the material intellect alone, or the material intellect and the agent [intellect] by analogy, for where there is no true generation, there is no agent. We agree with Alexander in regard to the way of asserting the agent intellect and we differ from him in regard to the nature of the material intellect. We differ from Themistius in regard to the nature of the intellect which is in a positive disposition and in regard to the manner of asserting the agent intellect. We also agree with Alexander in a certain way in regard to the nature of the intellect which is in a positive disposition and in another way we differ. These, therefore, are the differences by which the opinions ascribed to Aristotle are divided. You ought to know that use and exercise¹⁹⁸ are the causes of what appears to be the case

198. Cf. Alexander, *De Anima* (1887), 83.1–3; (1979), 107.

concerning the potency of the agent intellect which is in [454] us for separating [things] and the material intellect for receiving [things]. They are, I say, causes on account of the positive disposition existing through use and exercise in the passible and corruptible intellect which Aristotle called **passible**, and [which] he said plainly is corruptible. If not, it would happen that the power which is in us making the intelligibles would be material and likewise the passible power. For this reason no one can reason on the basis of this that the material intellect is mixed with the body. For what one holding it to be mixed says in response to that account in regard to the agent intellect, we [ourselves also] say in response to this in regard to the material intellect. By that intellect which Aristotle called **passible** human beings are distinguished in terms of the four powers mentioned in *The Topics*¹⁹⁹ which al-Fârâbî listed in his *Sophistic Refutations*.²⁰⁰ By that intellect a human being differs from the other animals. And if [it were] not [for this], then it would be necessary that the conjoining of the agent intellect and the recipient would be with animals in the same way.²⁰¹ Indeed, the practical intellect differs from the theoretical in virtue of the diversity of the disposition existing in this intellect. These things having been explained, let us return to our [account] and let us say:

21. There will, however, be conceptualizing of indivisible things in the case of those things in which there is no falsity. However, in regard to things in which there is the true and the false that [conceptualizing] is then a composition in reference to intelligible things insofar as they are beings. As Empedocles said that many heads and necks are distributed . . . ultimately in virtue of the composition of friendship. So too do separate things exist in virtue of composition, for instance, say the incommensurate and the diameter.²⁰² (3.6, 430a26–31) [455]

199. "The instruments whereby we are to become well supplied with deductions are four: one, the securing of propositions; second, the power to distinguish in how many ways an expression is used; third, the discovery of the differences of things; fourth, the investigation of likenesses." *Topics* 1.13, 105a22–25, *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (1984).

200. This work is not extant. See Peters (1968), 25, n. 10. This does not seem to arise in al-Fârâbî, *Book of Sophistic Refutations* (1986).

201. Cf. [502].

202. "The thinking of indivisibles is found in those cases where falsehood is impossible: where the alternative of true or false applies, there we always find a sort of combining of objects of thought in a quasi-unity. As Empedocles said that 'where heads of many a creature sprouted without necks' they afterwards by Love's power were combined, so here too objects of thought which were separate are combined, e.g. 'incommensurate' and diagonal." Aristotle, *De Anima* (1984). The Arabic text used by Averroes does not render explicitly the Greek *ἐν* in the phrase *ὡς περ ἐν ὄντων*, "in a quasi-unity." Averroes' alternate translation offers a quite different understanding: *والتى فيها كذب*

When you have judged by sense that something pleasant is here or there, then something unpleasant before the intellect will be either fled if the intellect has thought that this is evil or pursued if it has thought that this is good. It happens universally in this way for the intellect [working together] with sense in regard to all actions, namely, either to contradict this by seeing that something unpleasant is good and by seeking that which sense fled, or to be in agreement with sense by seeing that something pleasant is good. Next he said: **For falsity and truth are not involved in operation. They are . . . in the same genus.** A blank space was here in the manuscript. It could be: **For falsity and truth are**, etc., that is, for falsity and truth existing in the theoretical intellect are different from falsity and truth existing in the practical intellect.²²⁸ Next he said: **They both are in the same genus as also is the case in regard to what is good and in regard to what is evil.** It can be understood that these two are in the same genus because each is a [sort of] knowledge and because truth is in the genus of what is good and falsity in the genus of what is evil. What he said, {478} **in regard to what is good and what is evil**, can be understood such that it is an exposition of what he said: **They are . . . in the same genus.** It is as if he says: they are in the same genus, that is, in regard to what is good and what is evil. When he had explained that both are united under [the notion of] the good and the evil, he explained what distinguishes them. He said: **but there is a difference**, etc. That is, but nevertheless they are distinct, because truth is in the theoretical intellect as absolutely good and falsity is in it as evil without qualification. Truth in the practical intellect is what is good²²⁹ in a certain respect and conditionally (he meant this when he said: **and particular**), while falsity is what is evil with respect to that end which should be found

to have been lost, with the result that the Arabic translator understood the sentence as we have it above. It is not clear why Averroes apparently refrained from consulting the alternate translation, which renders the Greek accurately.

228. There are some Arabic fragments which correspond rather generally albeit unclearly to Book 3, 34.18–20: *قول عرويه فاما الصدق والكذب فانهما يوجدان في العقل* (Long Commentary Fragments [1985], 45).²³⁰ A repetitive statement, for the true and the false both exist in the theoretical intellect in another kind . . . not the practical kind."

229. Some Arabic fragments correspond generally to Book 3, 34.28–33: *جنس واحد لأن الصدق يقع تحت جنس الخير والكذب تحت جنس الشر. ثم قال: «لكنهما يفتقران أي أن الصدق في العقل النظري خير مطلق والكذب فيه شر على الإطلاق فاطلاق الخير في الجنس واحد»* (Long Commentary Fragments [1985], 45); "one genus because the true falls under the genus of the good and the false falls under the genus of the evil. Then he said: **but they are distinguished**, that is, the true in the theoretical intellect is unconditioned good and the false in it is evil without qualification. So the unqualified nature of the good in the practical [intellect] is good."

[existing]. It can be understood in virtue of what he said: **and particular**, that is, in virtue of an end, namely, they are distinct because one is good without qualification and the other is good with respect to a given end. The closest intention is [to be found] in those two.

35. It also knows things which are said by way of negation,²³⁰ insofar as snub-nosed qua snub-nosed is indivisible. But in the case of what is concave, if the intellect has understood, then it will understand the intention of concavity denuded of flesh. But mathematical intentions are not [the same as] singular things in this way. (431b12–16)

He means by **things which are said by way of negation** mathematical things. He means by negation separation from matter. He means that when the intellect understands things in separation from matter, it does not do this (479) because they in themselves are not in matter, as some have thought. But what it does, namely, that it understands these things as not in matter although they are in matter, is as if it were understanding snub-nose, insofar as it is snub-nose, separate from matter. But it is impossible for snub-nose insofar as it is snub-nose to be separate from matter. It is possible, however, for its genus, which is concavity, to be distinct from matter. He indicates by this that this possibility in reference to the separation of those by the intellect is consequent upon their natures and quiddities, not because it happens that they are not in matter. Next he said: **And mathematical intentions**, etc. That is, the mode of being of mathematical intentions outside the soul is not [the same] as the mode according to which they exist in the soul. That account can be read in this way: the intellect can also know mathematical things by some kind of definition, for understanding differs according to the diversity of the nature of the thought object. For instance, snub-nose, insofar as it is snub-nose, is not divided [into distinct parts] when it is thought; but insofar as it is concavity, then if the intellect understands it to be a singular per se, it will not understand the intention of concavity except as denuded of flesh. The example which he brings up supplies what is missing from the account.

36. As a separate thing is thought when [the intellect] understands those things (for what is in act universally is the intellect which is in act), our cogitation later will concern whether or not it can understand any of the separate things while it is separate from magnitude.²³¹ (431b16–19) [480]

230. *Res que dicuntur negative* corresponds to the Greek τὰ δὲ ἐν ἀφαίρεσει λεγόμενα, "The so-called abstract objects" (Aristotle, *De Anima* [1984]); إدراك العقل الأشياء المحررة من الهيولى (ibid. [1954]); "the intellect's apprehending things stripped of matter."

231. This Text is far from the Greek: οὕτω τὰ μαθηματικά, οὐ κεχωρισμένα <ὄντα>, οὐς κεχωρισμένα νοεῖ, ὅταν νοῇ <ᾗ> ἐκεῖνα. ὅλως δὲ ὁ νοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ κατ' ἐνέργειαν

The intellect becomes the thing which the intellect separates when it separates and understands it, since it is necessary universally in regard to the intellect that what is intelligible in act be intellect in act. Hence, we must investigate and cogitate later on whether that intellect which is in us can understand something which is in itself intellect and separate from matter, just as it understands what makes it intellect in act after it was intellect in potency. He said: **while it is separate from magnitude**. It occurred this way in this manuscript. If it is correct, it should be understood this way, that is to say, we ought to cogitate later on whether it is possible for the intellect which is in us to understand things separate from matter insofar as they are separate from magnitude, without relation to something else. In place of that account there appeared in the other text the following: "Later on we will investigate whether or not the intellect, when existing in the body, not as separate from it, is able to apprehend any of those things which are separate from bodies."²³² This question is different from the one mentioned earlier. For that is a question on the part of one who allows that the intellect which is in potency understands

τὰ πράγματα. ἄρα δ' ἐνδέχεται τῶν κεχωρισμένων τι νοεῖν ὄντα αὐτὸν μὴ κεχωρισμένον μεγέθους, ἢ οὐ, σκεπτέον ὕστερον. "It is thus that the mind when it is thinking the objects of mathematics thinks them as separate though they are not separate. 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." Aristotle, *De Anima* (1984). The alternate Arabic translation is less than completely accurate and literal but much better than Averroes' primary translation, which misses the point of this famous passage: وكذلك الأشياء العلمية ليست بمفارقة الهيولى إلا بالتوهم. - وفي الجملة العقل يدرك الأشياء إدراك فعل. وسننظر أخيراً إن كان يمكن العقل، وهو في الجسم، إدراك شيء من مفارقات الأجساد، أو ليس يمكنه ذلك. (ibid. [1954]); "Likewise the things known are not separate from matter except by imagination. And in general the intellect apprehends the things with an active apprehension. Later on we will investigate whether or not intellect is able to apprehend any of the things separate from bodies while it is in the body." Regarding this text, also see the following note.

232. *Et cecidit in alia scriptura loco istius sermonis sic: Et in postremo perscrutabimur utrum intellectus, essendo in corpore, non separatus ab eo, possit comprehendere aliquod eorum que separantur a corporibus, aut non.* إدراك، وهو في الجسم، وسننظر أخيراً إن كان يمكن العقل، وهو في الجسم، إدراك شيء من مفارقات الأجساد، أو ليس يمكنه ذلك (Aristotle, *De Anima* [1954]). The Latin *non separatus ab eo*, "not as separated from it," is not reflected in the extant Arabic and yet seems to correspond precisely to the Greek of Aristotle: αὐτὸν μὴ κεχωρισμένον. Nevertheless, Dimitri Gutas, who has undertaken the task of preparing a new edition of the Arabic text of Averroes' alternate translation, has suggested to me that <غير مفارق له> was perhaps added from a marginal gloss and merely explains *essendo in corpore*, وهو في الجسم, which is a paraphrastic rendering of the Greek. This view is supported by the Text at *De Anima* 429a12. See Book 3, n. 3 [379].

forms which are without qualification separate from matter, not insofar as the intellect is united with us. On this understanding there will be an investigation into the question of whether [intellect] can understand forms insofar as it is united with us, not whether it can understand forms at all. This understanding was mentioned by Themistius in his book on the soul,²³³ and the first question, which [Aristotle] meant for later, was omitted.

It is necessary, therefore, first to investigate whether or not it is possible for the material intellect to understand separate things [481] and, if it does understand them, whether or not it is possible for it to understand them insofar as it is united with us. For this reason it is possible that in the copy from which we took this account the word "not" dropped out, so that it should be read this way: **our cogitation later on will concern whether . . . it can understand any of the separate things while it is** not separate from magnitude, that is, insofar as it is in contact with magnitude and united with us, in such a way that we ourselves understand the intellect which it understands. This investigation which he intends is extremely difficult and ambiguous and we must investigate this insofar as we are able.

Let us say, therefore: it seems to me that he who asserts that the material intellect is generable and corruptible can find no natural way by which we can be conjoined with the separate intellects. For the intellect ought to be intelligible in all ways, and chiefly in the case of things freed from matter. If it were therefore possible for a generable and corruptible substance to understand separate forms and be made to be the same as these, then it would be possible for a possible nature to become a necessary one, as al-Fârâbî said in [his] *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*.²³⁴ This follows necessarily according to the principles accepted by the wise.

[Such would be the case,] unless someone says that the intention which Alexander meant, namely, concerning the existence of the acquired intellect, is not a newly created conceptualization in the material intellect which did not exist before. But, rather, [this intellect] is united with us by a uniting to the extent that [this intellect] is form for us in virtue of which we understand other beings, as appears from the account of Alexander. Still, it is not apparent from this how that conjoining is possible. For if we assert [482] that the conjoining came to exist after [previously] not existing, as is necessary, it follows that at that time at which it is asserted to exist, there is a change in the recipient or in the received object or in both. Since it is impossible for it to be in the received

233. See Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 114.31-33; (1973), 209.13-16; (1996), 141.

234. Regarding this lost Commentary, see n. 163 and the introduction, p. lxx and lxxxvi-lxxxix and the notes there.

object, it remains that it is in the recipient. And since there is a change existing in the recipient after it did not exist, there will necessarily be there a newly created reception and a recipient substance newly created after it did not exist. When, therefore, we assert a newly created reception, the aforementioned question will arise. If we do not assert a reception proper to us, there will be no difference between its conjoining with us and its conjoining with all beings and between its conjoining with us at one time and at another time, unless we assert its conjoining with us to be in a way different from that of reception. What then is that way?

Owing to the obscure character of that way according to Alexander, we see he is uncertain in regard to this. Sometimes, therefore, he says that what understands a separate intellect is not the material intellect nor the intellect which is in a positive disposition, and these are his words in his book on the soul.²³⁵ The intellect, then, which understands this is the one which is not corrupted, not the intellect which is a material subject. For the material intellect is corrupted in virtue of the corruption of the soul, because it is one power belonging to the soul; and when that intellect is corrupted, its power and its actuality will be corrupted. Next, after he had explained that it is necessary for the intellect which is in us and which understands the separate forms to be neither generable nor corruptible, he recounted that this intellect is the acquired intellect according to the account of Aristotle, and he said: "The intellect, therefore, which is not corrupted is that intellect which is in us as separate, [483] which Aristotle calls acquired because it is in us from outside, not a power which is in the soul nor a disposition in virtue of which we understand different things and also understand that intellect."²³⁶

If, therefore, by the acquired intellect in virtue of which we understand separate intelligences he meant the agent intelligence, then the account concerning the way of conjoining of that intellect with us still remains [to be given]. If he meant a separate intellect different from the agent intellect, as appears from the opinion of al-Fārābī in his *Letter on the Intellect*,²³⁷ and also

235. Cf. Alexander, *De Anima* (1887), 87.24–88.16; (1979), 114–115.

236. ὁ οὖν νοούμενος ἀφθαρτος ἐν ἡμῖν νοῦς οὗτός ἐστιν, <ὅτι χωριστός τε ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ἀφθαρτος νοῦς, ὃν καὶ θύραθεν Ἀριστοτέλης λέγει, νοῦς ὁ ἐξωθεν γινόμενος ἐν ἡμῖν, > ἀλλ' οὐχ ἡ δύναμις τῆς ἐν ἡμῖν ψυχῆς, οὐδὲ ἡ ἐξίς, καθ' ἣν ἐξίς ὁ δυνάμει νοῦς τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ τοῦτον νοεῖ. Alexander, *De Anima* (1887), 90.23–91.4; (1979), 119.

237. Al-Fārābī, *Letter on the Intellect* (1983), 20.1–22.8. "When the intellect in actuality thinks the intelligibles which are forms in it, insofar as they are intelligibles in actuality, then the intellect of which it was first said that it is the intellect in actuality, becomes now the acquired intellect (العقل المستفاد)." Ibid. (1983), 20.1–4; (1973), 217; (1974), 99–100. "However, these forms [i.e., separate forms which never existed in matter] can only be per-

insofar as we are able to understand from what is evident of that account, then the question in regard to the way of conjoining of that intellect with us is also the same as the question in regard to the way of the conjoining of the agent intellect on the view of one holding that the agent intellect is the same as the acquired intellect. This is more evident from the account of Alexander. He, therefore, said this in his *Book on the Soul*²³⁸ in regard to the way of the conjoining of the intellect which is in act with us.

But what he said in a treatise which he composed, entitled *On the Intellect According to the Account of Aristotle*, seems to contradict what he said in his book on the soul. These are his words: "When the intellect which is in potency is complete and fulfilled, then it will understand the agent intellect. For just as the potency for walking which a human being has at birth becomes actual in time when that in virtue of which walking comes about is actualized, so too when the intellect is actualized, it will understand these things which are intrinsically intelligible and it will make sensibles into intelligibles, because it is the agent."²³⁹ What is evident from that account [484] contradicts his account in the *Book On the Soul*, namely, that the intellect which is in potency does not understand the intellect which is in act.

But when one considers all the accounts by that man and brings them to-

fectly thought after all intelligibles or most of them have become thought in actuality, and the acquired intellect has come into being." Ibid. (1983), 21.8–22.1; (1973), 217; (1974), 100.

238. Alexander, *De Anima* (1887), 90.19ff.; (1979), 119ff.

239. *Et hec sunt verba eius: Et intellectus qui est in potentia, cum fuerit completus et augmentatus, tunc intelliget agentem; quoniam, quemadmodum potentia ambulandi quam homo habet in nativitate venit ad actum post tempus quando perficitur illud per quod fit ambulatio, ita intellectus, cum fuerit perfectus, intelliget ea que sunt per suam naturam intellecta, et faciet sensata esse intellecta, quia est agens.* τοῦτο δὲ καὶ αὐτὸ ὁ δυνάμει νοῦς τελειούμενος καὶ αὐξόμενος νοεῖ. ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ περιπατητικὴ δύναμις, ἣν ἔχει ὁ ἄνθρωπος εὐθὺς τῷ γενέσθαι, εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἄγεται προϊόντος τοῦ χρόνου τελειουμένου αὐτοῦ οὐ κατὰ πάθος τι, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ὁ νοῦς τελειωθείς τὰ τε φύσει νοητὰ νοεῖ καὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ δὲ νοητὰ αὐτῷ ποιεῖ, ἅτε ὢν ποιητικός (Alexander, *De Intellectu* [1887], 110.30–111.2). "This then [is what] the potential intellect, when it is being perfected and has developed, thinks. For just as the power of walking, which a human being has as soon as he comes to be, is led to actuality, as time advances, by being perfected itself and not by being affected in some way, in the same way the [potential] intellect too when it has been perfected both thinks the things that are intelligible by nature and makes sensible things intelligible to itself, as being productive" (ibid. [2004], 34–35; [1990], 53). والعقل أيضا الذي بالقوة إذا تم ونما عقل هذا، لأنه كما أن قوة المشي التي تكون للإنسان مع ولادته تصير إلى الفعل إذا أمعن به الزمان وكمل الشيء الذي به يكون المشي، كذلك العقل إذا استكمل عقل الأشياء التي هي بطبيعتها معقولة، وجعل الأشياء المحسوسة كذلك العقل (ibid. [1971], 38.1–4; cf. [1956], 191.10–192.1).

gether, one will see that he holds that when the intellect which is in potency is actualized, then the agent intelligence will be united with us [and it is] in virtue of this that we understand separate things and in virtue of this that we make sensible things intelligible in act, insofar as it becomes form in us. It is as if he means by this account that when the intellect which is in potency is actualized and perfected, then that intellect [i.e., the agent intellect] will be united with [the material intellect] and the form will come to be in [the material intellect]. Then we will understand other things in virtue of that [agent intellect]. [This is] not in such a way that the material intellect understands [the agent intellect] and on account of that understanding there comes to exist a conjoining with that intellect [i.e., the agent intellect], but rather the conjoining of that intellect [i.e., the agent intellect] with us is the cause of the fact that [the material intellect] understands [the agent intellect] and we understand other separate things through [the agent intellect].²⁴⁰

You are able to know that this is the opinion of that man in virtue of what he said in that treatise: "Since what is intrinsically intelligible, which is intellect in act, is the cause of the material intellect's separating and conceptualizing any of the material forms by ascending in the presence of that form, then it is said that it is the acquired agent [intellect]. It is not part of the soul nor a power of the soul, but rather it comes to exist in us from outside when we have thought in virtue of it."²⁴¹ It is evident, therefore, that he understands in virtue of this

240. I have supplied the referents of pronouns in accord with my understanding of this passage. Without those referents supplied, the passage is pervasively ambiguous. The sense of the passage is that the material intellect's thinking is consequent upon conjunction with the agent intellect and not causative of the conjunction. Then in virtue of this conjunction, we are able to think separate things through the material intellect and through our conjunction with the material intellect. Averroes is stressing that understanding the agent intellect means nothing more than the actualization of intelligibles in act in the material intellect. Separate immaterial substances such as the agent intellect are not direct objects of our knowing. But when the material intellect is receptive of the intellectually transformative "light" of the agent intellect, it is appropriate to say that it is in a sense understanding the consequences of the activity of the agent intellect and thereby understanding the agent intellect. It is in our will and power—that is, in the ability of our imaginative or cogitative power taken broadly—to provide the images needed to bring about knowledge in the material intellect and thereby in ourselves. Note that the Arabic *العقل* can be rendered *intellectus* or *intelligentia*. Perhaps the translator's use of *intelligentia* here is to emphasize that the agent intellect is separate in existence.

241. *Et potes scire quod ista est opinio istius hominis per hoc quod dixit in illo tractatu: Illud igitur intellectum per suam naturam, quod est intellectus in actu, cum fuerit causa intellectus materialis in abstrahendo et in formando unamquamque formarum materialium ascendendo apud illam formam, tunc dicitur quod est adeptus agens; et non est pars anime neque virtus anime, set fit in nobis extrinseco quando nos intellexerimus per ipsum.* τοῦτο δὲ τὸ νοητὸν

account that when the intellect which is in act has become formal cause of the material intellect in its proper action (this is through the ascension of the material intellect [485] in the presence of that form), then it will be called the acquired intellect. This is because in that disposition we will be understanding in virtue of it since it is form for us, for then it will be the final form for us.

What, therefore, supports that opinion is that the agent intellect is first a cause bringing to actuality the material intellect and the intellect which is in a positive disposition. For this reason it is not united with us and we do [not] understand separate things from the start in virtue of it. When, therefore, the material intellect has been actualized, then the agent will become the form of the material [intellect]²⁴² and will be united with us and we will understand other separate things in virtue of it. [This does] not [occur] in such a way that the intellect which is in a positive disposition understands this intellect, since the intellect which is in a positive disposition is generable and corruptible, while that one is not generable or corruptible.

But on this account the aforementioned question occurs, namely, that what now is form for the intellect which is in a positive disposition after it did not previously exist arises from some newly created disposition in the intellect which is in a positive disposition. This [newly created disposition] is the reason why that intellect is form for the intellect which is in a positive disposition after it previously was not. If that disposition is not a reception in the intellect which is in a positive disposition in reference to the agent intellect, what then is that disposition? For if there is a reception, 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.

For this reason we see later that since al-Fārābī believed the opinion of Al-

τε τῇ αὐτοῦ φύσει καὶ κατ' ἐνέργειαν νοῦς, αἴτιον γινόμενον τῷ ὀλικῷ νῷ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸ τοιοῦτο εἶδος ἀναφορὰν χωρίζειν τε καὶ μιμεῖσθαι καὶ νοεῖν καὶ τῶν ἐνύλων εἰδῶν ἕκαστον καὶ ποιεῖν νοητὸν αὐτό, θύραθεν ἐστι λεγόμενος νοῦς ὁ ποιητικός οὐκ ὢν μόριον καὶ δυνάμεις τις τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς, ἀλλ' ἔξωθεν γιγόμενος ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅταν αὐτὸν νοῶμεν (Alexander, *De Intellectu* [1887], 108.19–24). "This thing that is both intelligible in its own nature and intellect in actuality comes to be the cause of the material intellect's, by reference to such a form, separating and imitating and thinking each of the enmattered forms as well, and making it intelligible. It is the intellect said to be 'from without,' the productive [intellect], not being a part or power of our soul, but coming to be in us from outside, whenever we think of it" (ibid. [2004], 29–30; [1990], 49). فهذا المعقول بطبيعته، الذي هو عقل بالفعل، إذا صار علة للعقل الهيولاني. لا لتزاع والتقبل والتصور لكل واحد من الصور الهيولانيات، وكل معقول بترقيته نحو تلك الصورة قيل فيه إنه العقل المستفاد الفاعل، وليس هو جزءاً ولا قوة للنفس منا، ولكنه يحدث فينا من خارج إذا كمل عقلنا به (ibid. [1971], 34.19–22; [1956], 186.2–6).

242. Cf. [445], [486].

exander to be true in regard to the generation of the material intellect, it was necessary in his view to hold according to this opinion that the agent intelligence is nothing but a cause acting upon us only, and he said this clearly in his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*.²⁴³ {486} This is contrary to his opinion in *The Letter on the Intellect*, for there he said that it is possible for the material intellect to understand separate things.²⁴⁴ This is the opinion of Ibn Bâjjah. Those then are the questions for those who assert that the material intellect is generated and that the end is to be conjoined with separate things.

We also see that for those asserting it to be a separate power questions no less [challenging] than those follow. For if it is in the nature of that material intellect that it understands separate things, it is necessary that it be understanding them always, in the future and in the past. It is thought, therefore, that it follows upon this position that as soon as the material intellect is conjoined with us, the agent intellect too is conjoined with us, which is unthinkable and contrary to what people assert.

But that question can be resolved by what we said earlier, namely, that 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. Since it is so, it is possible to say that the way in which the material intellect is united with us is different from the way in which it is united with the agent intellect. If it is different, then there is no conjoining at all.²⁴⁵ If it is the same, but initially it is in some disposition and afterwards in another, what then is that disposition? If, however, we assert that the separate material intellect does not have the nature for understanding separate things, then the uncertainty will be greater. Those, therefore, are all questions which arise {487} for those asserting that human perfection is to understand separate things.

We must also recount the accounts on the basis of which it is thought to follow that we have a nature for understanding separate things ultimately. For these accounts are completely opposite to those and perhaps in virtue of this we will be able to see the truth. The reason for that uncertainty and labor, however, is that we find no account by Aristotle concerning this intention, although Aristotle did promise to explain this.²⁴⁶

Let us say, therefore, that Ibn Bâjjah investigated this question at length and worked to explain that this conjoining is possible in his treatise which he called, *On the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man*. In his *Book on the Soul* and in

243. Regarding this lost commentary, see n. 234.

244. Al-Fârâbî, *Letter on the Intellect* (1983), 17.9–22.8; (1973), 216–217; (1974), 98–101.

245. That is, if it is altogether different, then our conjoining is no literal and direct conjoining at all.

246. *De Anima* 3.7, 431b17–19.

many other books it will be seen that this question did not leave his mind nor over time did he take his eye off it. We already expounded that treatise to the extent that we could.²⁴⁷ 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?! The word of Ibn Bâjjah in regard to this is more firm than [that] of others, but nevertheless the questions which we recounted arise for him. We must recount here the methods of that man, but first what the commentators said in regard to this.

Let us say, therefore, that Themistius was supported in this by way of the major. For he says that since the material intellect has the power to separate forms from matters and to understand them, how much more [reasonable is it that] it has a natural disposition for understanding these which are from the outset free of matter.²⁴⁸ That account will come about in such a way that the material intellect is either corruptible {488} or not corruptible, namely, separable or not separable.²⁴⁹ But according to the opinion of those saying that the material intellect is a power in the body and generated, that account will be sufficient in a qualified respect [only], not probable [in its own right]. For it does not follow that what is visible in itself is more visible for us. For instance, considering color and the light of the sun, [we see that] color has less of the intention of visibility than does the sun, since color is visible only in virtue of the sun, but we cannot look upon the sun as [we do] color. This occurs for sight owing to the mixture of matter.

But if we assert that the intellect is not mixed with matter, then certainly that account will be true, namely, that what is more intelligible is apprehended more [perfectly]. For in the case of things capable of apprehending which are

247. Ibn Bâjjah, however, expounded his own account and said that his opinion is the opinion of all the Peripatetics, namely that conjoining is possible and that it is the end [for human beings] {433}. Averroes is likely referring to his summary of Ibn Bâjjah's *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* in his *Short Commentary on the De Anima* (1950), 90–95; (1987), Spanish, 214–221. On the doctrine of Ibn Bâjjah, see the introduction, pp. xxv–xxvii and lxxxix–xciii. Also see Altmann (1965).

248. ὅς γάρ καὶ τὰ ἐνυλὰ εἶδη χωρίζων τῆς ὕλης νοεῖ, δηλονότι πέφυκε μᾶλλον τὸ κεχωρισμένον νοεῖν (Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* [1899], 115.6–7); “For just as it also thinks the enmattered forms by separating them from matter, so is it clearly all the more naturally fitted for thinking the separate forms.” (ibid. [1996], 141); فكما يعقل الصور المخالطة للهيولي بأن [يفرقها] من الهيولي فمن البين أنه أحدى بأن يكون من شأنه أن يعقل الأشياء المفارقة (ibid. [1973], 210.6–8); “For as it thinks enmattered forms by separating them from matter, so it is clear all the more that it is of its nature to know separate things.”

249. That is, that argument would hold regardless of whether the material intellect were corruptible or incorruptible, separate or not separate.

not mixed with matter, what apprehends the less perfect necessarily apprehends the more perfect and not the contrary. But if this is necessary from its nature and substance, then the aforementioned question arises, which is: how is [the agent intellect] not conjoined with us in the beginning, namely, immediately when the material intellect is conjoined with us? If, therefore, we assert that it is conjoined with us finally, not initially, we ought to give the reason.

On this topic, however, there is support for Alexander in what I say, and this is the fact that when every generated being reaches the end in generation and final actuality, then it will reach the completion and end of its activity, if it is among beings which act, or in its affection, if it is from among passible beings, or in both, if it is of both. For instance, one does not come to the end in the activity of walking except when he comes (489) to the end in generation.²⁵⁰ 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. Since its action is to create and to understand intelligibles, when it is in final actuality, it necessarily possesses these two activities actually. Actuality in creating intelligibles is to make all intelligibles in potency to be intelligibles in act. Perfection in understanding is to understand all things separate and not separate. It is necessary, therefore, that when the intellect which is in a positive disposition comes to perfection in its generation, it have these two activities.

In regard to this there are no few questions. For it is not self-evident that the perfection of the activity of understanding is to understand separate things, unless this term, *to imagine*,²⁵¹ were to be said of these things and material things in a univocal way, as this term, *to walk*, is said of the less actual and the more actual.

Also, how is the agent intellect's proper action, which is to make intelligibles, ascribed to a generable and corruptible intellect, namely, what is in a positive disposition? Unless [perhaps] one asserts that the intellect which is in a positive disposition is the agent intellect in composition with the material intellect, as Themistius says,²⁵² or asserts that the final form belonging to us by which we separate the intelligibles and understand is composed of the intellect which is in a positive disposition and the agent intellect, as Alexander and Ibn Bâjjah assert, and we also figured to be apparent from the account of Aristotle.

250. Walking is essentially a motion, and so it is an imperfect or incomplete activity. When its end is achieved, there is no motion.

251. *Ymaginari* here is surely تصور *taṣawwur*, which in the case of material entities is imagination but in the case of immaterial entities is conceptualization.

252. This is the point of an extended discussion by Themistius. See Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* (1899), 99.8ff; (1973), 179.6ff; (1996), 123ff.

Even if we had asserted this to be so, nothing would result from the perfection of this activity of creating intelligibles (490) except the perfection of the activity of understanding these things, not [perfection of the activity] of understanding separate things. For it is impossible that understanding these be ascribed to generation or to coming to be by some generated being (for instance, [to coming to be] by the intellect which is in a positive disposition), unless accidentally. If [it were] not [so], then the generable will be made eternal, as we said.

A question of great importance also arises in the case of the account saying that the form by which we extract intelligibles is the intellect which is in a positive disposition in composition with the agent intellect. For what is eternal does not need the generable and corruptible in its activity. How, then, is the eternal in composition with the corruptible in such a way that there comes to be from them one activity? But we will speak about this later.²⁵³ For it seems that this position is, as it were, the starting point and foundation of what we want to say concerning the possibility of conjoining with separate things according to Aristotle, namely, the position that the final form belonging to us by means of which we extract and make intelligibles in virtue of our will is composed of the agent intellect and the intellect which is in a positive disposition. We see, therefore, from the account of the Peripatetic commentators directed toward this end that this is possible,²⁵⁴ namely, to understand separate things ultimately.

Ibn Bâjjah, however, said a great deal on this matter, chiefly in the treatise which he called *On the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man*. What supported his position on this question is this: first he asserted that the theoretical intelligibles have come to be; then he asserted that everything which has come to be has a quiddity; then he asserted that for everything having a quiddity, the intellect is naturally constituted to extract that quiddity; and from these he concluded that the intellect is naturally constituted to extract the forms and quiddities of intelligibles.²⁵⁵ Al-Fârâbî is in agreement with him on this in his book (491) *On Intellect and the Intelligible*²⁵⁶ and it is from there that Ibn Bâjjah drew this. With this Ibn Bâjjah concluded that the intellect is naturally constituted to extract forms and quiddities of intelligibles.

He went about this in two ways, one in the *Treatise*²⁵⁷ and a second in his

253. [497ff].

254. I read *possibile* with manuscripts A, B, D, and G instead of *possibilem*.

255. This is the doctrine implicit in the account of the grasp of intelligibles given by Ibn Bâjjah in sections 9ff. of his *Treatise on Conjoining with the Intellect*. Ibn Bâjjah, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), 15ff.; Spanish, 33ff.; (1968), 163ff.; (1981), 188ff.

256. Al-Fârâbî, *Letter on the Intellect* (1983), 12.4–17.8; (1973), 215–216; (1974), 96–99.

257. That is, Ibn Bâjjah, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), (1968), (1981).

Book on the Soul,²⁵⁸ and they are similar to one another. In the *Book on the Soul* he joined to this that multiplicity does not accrue for the intelligibles of things except in virtue of the multiplication of spiritual forms with which they will be sustained in each individual. According to this the intelligible of horse in me will be different from its intelligible in you. From this it follows by conversion of the opposite that for every intelligible not having a spiritual form by which it is sustained, that intelligible is one in me and in you.²⁵⁹ Next he joined to this that the quiddity and form of the intelligible does not have an individual spiritual form by which it is sustained, since the quiddity of an intelligible is not the quiddity of a singular individual, be it spiritual or bodily, for it was explained that the intelligible is not an individual. From this it follows that the intellect is naturally constituted to understand the quiddity of the intelligible belonging to the intellect which is one for all human beings and what is such as this is a separate substance.²⁶⁰

In the *Book on the Soul* he first asserted in regard to the quiddity of an intelligible insofar as it is intelligible, [1] if it has not been conceded by us not to have a quiddity and [has not been conceded by us]²⁶¹ to be simple but rather [is asserted to be] composed (as is the disposition in all quiddities which have come to be), and [2] [if] it has been said that the quiddity of that intelligible insofar as it is intelligible also has a quiddity, namely, the intelligible of that quiddity, [492] then that intellect [which considers these] will also be naturally constituted to revert and to extract that quiddity.²⁶²

If it has not been conceded by us that this quiddity is simple and that the being belonging to it is the same as the intelligible, then what occurs in the first case will occur in regard to this, namely, that it also has a quiddity which has come to be. It is then necessary either that this proceed into infinity, or that the intellect be stopped there [in its regress]. But because it is impossible for this to proceed into infinity (because it would make infinite quiddities and intellects infinitely diverse in species exist, namely, insofar as some of them

258. The incomplete extant text of this work ends abruptly in the course of a discussion of the rational faculty. See Book 3, n. 33, at [397].

259. That is, the intelligible is one in itself, but it has distinct spiritual forms by which it is a particularized intention in each of us.

260. That is, the human intellect is naturally constituted to know the intelligible form in itself which exists in the separate agent intellect.

261. I follow de Libera in *Long Commentary*, Book 3 (1998), 381, n. 820, in preferring manuscripts A, C, D, and G, which omit *non* here.

262. That is, if we say that each intelligible has a quiddity and is composed, not simple, then if the quiddity has a quiddity and it is the nature of the intellect to extract quiddities, then the intellect will aim to extract the ultimate quiddity. The unacceptable consequences of this position are immediately given by Averroes in what follows.

are more freed from matter than others), it is necessary that the intellect be stopped. It will come to a stop when it reaches either [1] a quiddity which does not have a quiddity, or [2] something having a quiddity but [one such that] the intellect does not have the natural ability to extract it, or [3] [when] it reaches something which neither has nor is a quiddity. But it is impossible to find a quiddity which the intellect is not naturally constituted to extract from a quiddity, for that intellect then would not be called intellect except equivocally, since it was asserted that the intellect is naturally constituted to separate the quiddity insofar as it is a quiddity. It is also impossible for the intellect to reach something which neither has a quiddity nor is a quiddity, for what is not a quiddity and does not have a quiddity is a privation without qualification. There remains, therefore, the third division, namely, that the intellect reaches a quiddity not having a quiddity,²⁶³ and what is so is a separate form. He supported this by what Aristotle is accustomed to say in such demonstrations, namely, that when it is necessary to cut off an infinite regress, it is better to cut it off in the beginning.²⁶⁴ [493]

The conclusion of that demonstration, therefore, will be the same as the conclusion of the aforementioned demonstration. For if he had not added this, someone would have been able to say that there are many intellects intermediate between the intellect which is in a positive disposition and the agent intellect, either one, as al-Fârâbî intends in his treatise *On Intellect and the Intelligible*, which he called there *acquired*,²⁶⁵ or more than one. It is thought that al-Fârâbî concedes this in his *Commentary on [Aristotle's] On Generation and Corruption*, where he says, "How are those intermediate intellects exhausted?"²⁶⁶ that is, those whose existence we asserted to be between the theoretical intellect and the agent intellect. Those, therefore, are the more firm ways by which that man [scil., Ibn Bâjjah] proceeded in regard to this intention.

Let us say, however: But if this name *quiddity* is said of the quiddities of material things and of the quiddities of separate intellects in a univocal way, then the proposition saying that the intellect is naturally constituted to separate quiddities insofar as they are quiddities will be true. Similarly, if saying that intelligibles are composite and individuals are composite were something univocally said, [the same would be the case]. If, however, [the predication] is equivocal, the demonstration will not be true. But how [this is so] is very difficult, for it is self-evident that this name *quiddity* is not said of these with pure

263. That is, it is the quiddity itself, not merely something having a quiddity.

264. *De Anima* 3.2, 425b17–18; *Metaphysics* 7.6, 1032a2ff.

265. Al-Fârâbî, *Letter on the Intellect* (1983), 21.8–22.6; (1973), 217; (1974), 100–101.

266. This work is not extant. What is at issue here is how the many intermediate stages of intellectual abstraction, the intermediate intellects, are traversed in order for the intellect to reach the complete grasp of the intelligible quiddity itself.

univocity nor with pure equivocation. But whether it is said in many ways because it is intermediate needs consideration.²⁶⁷

But if we concede this to be said in a univocal way, the aforementioned question will occur, [the question of] how what is corruptible understands what is not corruptible, according to the opinion of those saying that the material intellect is corruptible [494] (this is the opinion of Ibn Bâjjah); or how what is naturally constituted to understand these things in the future and in the past understands by virtue of a new intellection, according to the opinion of those saying that the material intellect is not generable or corruptible. Also, if we have asserted that to understand separate things is in the substance and nature of the material intellect, why, then, is that intellection not analogous to the material intellects belonging to us in such a way that this [sort of] understanding is one of the parts of the theoretical sciences and will be one of the things sought in theoretical science?

Ibn Bâjjah seems to be undecided in this passage. In the treatise which he called *Of Farewell* he said that possibility is of two sorts: natural and divine, that is, that the intellection of that intellect is of a divine possibility, not of a possibility of nature.²⁶⁸ In the treatise *On Conjoining*, however, he said, "When the philosopher has ascended in another way to the contemplation of the intelligible insofar as it is intelligible, then he will understand separate substance." It is evident from this that [the activity of] understanding the intelligible according to him is part of the theoretical sciences, namely, natural science.²⁶⁹ This also appeared in his investigation.

Since it is so, the ignorance of that science which occurs for all of us human beings either will be because still we do not know the propositions which lead us to this science, as it is said of many arts which seem to be possible but are of causes unknown, for instance, alchemy; or [it will be because] this understanding of this is acquired through exercise and use of natural things.

267. At issue here is whether intellectual understanding of composite material things of the sublunar world is the very same activity as intellectual understanding of immaterial incomposite substances, in particular the agent intellect.

268. Ibn Bâjjah, *Letter of Farewell* (1943), 38–39; Spanish, 84–85; (1968), 141.11–142.7. In this work Ibn Bâjjah holds that we are able to exercise a natural capacity for science but that the ability to know one's essence and to know separate intellect requires the help of God.

269. Ibn Bâjjah, *Treatise on the Conjoining of the Intellect with Man* (1942), 16ff.; Spanish, 35ff.; (1968), 164ff.; (1981), 189ff. There and in sections 12–15 of his *Letter of Farewell* (1943), 24–30; Spanish, 59–69; [1968], 123–131, Ibn Bâjjah discusses the progression of abstraction through various levels, from that of the common folk to that of the natural philosopher concerned with material forms and finally to the highest level of abstraction which grasps the forms themselves.

but we have not yet had enough exercise and use to be able [495] to acquire this intellection; or this will be on account of a deficiency of our nature in a natural way.

If, then, this occurs on account of a deficiency in nature, then we and all who are naturally constituted to acquire this science are called human beings equivocally. If this occurs on account of ignorance of the propositions leading into this science, then theoretical science will not yet have been realized. Perhaps Ibn Bâjjah means this to be a view one cannot hold, but not [altogether] impossible. If this occurs on account of custom, then the account will be close to the account saying that the reason for this is ignorance of the propositions which lead to this science. All this is said while seen to be unlikely, although not impossible. How, therefore, can he evade those questions mentioned earlier?

Those, then, are all questions arising in this inquiry and they are as difficult as you see. We must say what has appeared to us to be the case regarding this. Let us say, therefore: 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.

This activity, namely, to create and make intelligibles, is prior in us to the action which is understanding, as Alexander says.²⁷⁰ For this reason he says that it is more appropriate to describe the intellect in virtue of this action, not in virtue of affection, since [496] in affection it shares in something else [also] belonging to the animal powers of the soul, but this is according to the opinion of those saying that affection in these is not said equivocally.

270. ἔτι καὶ πρότερον αὐτῷ τὸ ποιεῖν καὶ οὐσιῶδες. πρότερον γὰρ ποιεῖ τῇ ἀφαιρέσει νοητόν, εἴθ' οὕτως λαμβάνει τούτων τι ὃ νοεῖ τε καὶ ὀρίζεται, ὅτι τόδε τί ἐστι. καὶ γὰρ εἰ ἅμα χωρίζεται καὶ λαμβάνει, ἀλλὰ τὸ χωρίζειν προεπινοεῖται· τούτο γὰρ ἐστὶν αὐτῷ τὸ ληπτικῶ εἶναι τοῦ εἶδους (Alexander, *De Intellectu* [1887], 111.15–19). "Moreover, its producing is prior and [part of] its substance. First it produces by abstraction [something] intelligible, and then in this way it apprehends some one of these things which it thinks and defines as a this-something. Even if it separates and apprehends at the same time, nevertheless the separating is conceptually prior; for this is what it is for it to be able to apprehend the form." (ibid. [2004], 36; [1990], 54). وأيضاً فإن الفعل فيه أقدم، وهو ذاتي له، لأنه أولاً [ولاً] يوجد فاعلاً للمعقولات ثم حينئذ يخلطها إثر تعقلها ويحددها بأنها كذا، فانه وإن كان إفراجه الأشياء شيئاً شيئاً وأخذه إياها يكونان معا، فإن الأول ينفع لمقدماً للآخر، فإن هذا هو أخذ الصورة (ibid. [1971], 38.15–18); cf. (1956), 193.1–4.

Owing to that activity, namely, extracting any intelligible we wish and making it in act after it was in potency, Themistius held that the intellect which is in a positive disposition is composed of the material intellect and the agent [intellect].²⁷¹ This is the same thing that made Alexander believe that the intellect which is in us is composed, or as it were composed, of the agent intellect and that which is in a positive disposition, since he holds that the substance of this [intellect] which is in a positive disposition ought to be different from the substance of the agent intellect.²⁷²

These two fundamental points have been asserted, namely, that the intellect which is in us has these two activities, namely, to apprehend intelligibles and to make them, while the intelligibles come to be in us in two ways: either naturally (they are the primary propositions with respect to which we do not know when, whence, and how they came forth) or voluntarily (they are intelligibles acquired on the basis of the primary propositions).²⁷³ It was explained that it is necessary that the intelligibles possessed by us naturally be from something which is in itself an intellect freed from matter (this is the agent intellect). When this has been explained, it is necessary that the intelligibles possessed by us from the primary propositions be some product brought together from propositions known and the agent intellect. For we cannot say that the propositions do not enter into the being of acquired intelligibles; nor can we even say that they alone are agents of these (for it was already explained that the agent is one and eternal), as intended some of the Ancients who held that Aristotle meant these [primary propositions] by *agent intellect*.²⁷⁴

Since it is so, it is necessary that the theoretical intellect {497} be something

271. See Book 3, n. 233.

272. See Alexander, *De Anima* (1887), 89.11–91.6; (1979), 117–120, for his discussion of the separate productive intellect (agent intellect) in relation to our intellect and understanding. Cf. Alexander, *De Intellectu* (1887), 111.27–32; (1971), 39.6–10; (1956), 194.1–6. “The intellect that is by nature and from without will assist that in us, because other things too would not be intelligible, though being [so] potentially, if there did not exist something that was intelligible by its own peculiar nature. This, being intelligible by its own nature, by being thought comes to be the one who thinks it; it is intellect that has come to be in the one who thinks, and it is thought ‘from without’ and [is] immortal, and implants in the material [intellect] a disposition such that it thinks the things that are intelligible potentially.” (ibid. [2004], 36–37; [1990], 54–55).

273. Cf. Book 3 {407} and {506}, as well as Book 3, n. 90.

274. The primary propositions gathered empirically are not themselves intelligibles, but they do contribute to the being of acquired intelligibles; nor are they the agents in the generation of acquired intelligibles since that agent is the separate agent intellect. Note that in the present context Averroes is using the same term, “primary propositions,” sometimes to denote first principles of the understanding (cf. Book 3, n. 90) and

generated by the agent intellect and by primary propositions. That sort of intelligible happens to exist voluntarily, contrary to the way the first natural intelligibles exist. For with respect to every activity which has come to be from the compound of two different things, it is necessarily the case that one of those two be as it were matter and instrument and the other be as it were form or agent. The intellect in us, therefore, is composed of the intellect which is in a positive disposition and the agent intellect, either in such a way that the propositions are as it were matter and the agent intellect is as it were form, or in such a way that the propositions are as it were the instrument and the agent intellect is as it were the efficient [cause]. For the disposition is similar in this case.

But if we have asserted that the propositions are as it were the instrument, it will happen that an eternal activity arises from two things, one of which is eternal and the other not eternal (or it may be asserted that the instrument is eternal; and thus the theoretical intelligibles will be eternal). This will happen all the more if we have asserted these propositions to be as it were matter. For it is impossible for something generable and corruptible to be the matter of something eternal. How, then, can we escape this question?

Let us say, therefore, that if what we said, that the propositions necessarily are from the agent intellect either as matter or as instrument, if they enter into the being of the theoretical intelligibles, then it was not the account of a necessary consequence insofar as matter is matter and instrument is instrument. Rather, insofar as it is necessary here that there be proportion and disposition between the agent intellect and the propositions {498} which are likened to matter and an instrument in some way, not because it is true matter or a true instrument, it then seems to us that we can know the way in which the intellect which is in a positive disposition is as it were matter and the subject of the agent [intellect]. And when that way has been set forth by us, perhaps we will be able to know easily the way in which [the intellect which is in a positive disposition] is conjoined with separable intelligibles.

Let us say, therefore: the account, however, of one saying that if the conclusions are acquired by us from the agent intellect and the propositions, it is necessary that the propositions be in relation to the agent intellect as it were true matter and true instrument, that account, I say, is not necessary. But to an extent it is necessary that there be [some] relation in which the intellect which is in a positive disposition will be likened to matter and the agent intellect will be likened to form. What, then, is that relation and from what does it arise for the agent intellect that it has this relation to the intellect which is in a positive

sometimes to denote propositions known from experience which contribute to the content of the theoretical intellect.

disposition, while one is eternal and the other generable and corruptible? For all of these [thinkers] concede this relation exists. That the theoretical intelligibles are existing in us from these two intellects, namely, from what is in a positive disposition and from the agent intellect, compels them [to accept this view], as it were.

But Alexander and all those holding that the material intellect is generable and corruptible are not able to provide the cause for this relation. For those, however, who assert that the operating intellect is the intellect which is in a positive disposition, it will happen that the theoretical intelligibles are eternal and many other impossible things following upon this position.²⁷⁵ [499]

But for us who have asserted that the material intellect is eternal and the theoretical intelligibles are generable and corruptible in the way in which we mentioned, and that the material intellect understands both, namely, the material forms and the separate forms, it is evident that the subject of the theoretical intelligibles and of the agent intellect in this way is one and the same, namely, the material [intellect]. Similar to this is the transparent which receives color and light at one and the same time; and light is what brings color about.²⁷⁶

When this conjoining in us between the agent intellect and the material intellect has been established, we will be able to find out the way in which we say that the agent intellect is similar to form and that the intellect which is in a positive disposition is similar to matter. For in regard to any two things of which one is the subject and the second is more actual than the other, it is necessary that the relation of the more actual to the less actual be as the relation of form to matter.²⁷⁷ With this intention we say that the proportion of the first actuality of the imaginative power to the first actuality of the common sense is as the proportion of form to matter.

We, therefore, have already found the way in which it is possible for that intellect to be conjoined with us in the end and the reason why it is not united with us in the beginning. For when this has been asserted, it will necessarily happen that the intellect which is in us in act be composed of theoretical intelligibles and the agent intellect in such a way that the agent intellect is as it were the form of the theoretical intelligibles and the theoretical intelli-

275. That is, given that eternal intelligibles are grasped in intellectual understanding, if the agent in the process is the intellect in a positive disposition (*intellectus in habitu*, العقل بالملكة) which resides in us, then the eternal intelligibles will reside in us.

276. The transparent receives actualization as transparent from light and at the same moment receives color thanks to the light which enables color in potency to become color in act. Likewise, the material intellect receives actualization as intellect from the agent intellect and at the same moment receives intelligibles thanks to the agent intellect, which enables what is intelligible in potency to become intelligible in act.

277. Cf. *De Anima* 3.5, 430a10–11, and above [436–437].

gibles are as it were matter. In this way we will be able to generate intelligibles when we wish. 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.

There is no way in which the form is generated in us except that. For 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.

It is evident that when that motion is complete, immediately that intellect will be conjoined with us in all ways. Then it is evident that its relation to us in that disposition is as the relation of the intellect which is in a positive disposition in relation to us. Since it is so, 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. [501]

In this way, therefore, human beings, as Themistius says, are made like unto God in that he is all beings in a way and one who knows these in a way, for beings are nothing but his knowledge and the cause of beings is nothing but his knowledge.²⁷⁸ How marvelous is that order and how mysterious is that mode of being!

278. διὸ καὶ θεῶν μάλιστα ἔοικε· καὶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς πῶς μὲν αὐτὰ τὰ ὄντα ἐστὶ, πῶς δὲ ὁ τούτων χορηγός. τιμιώτερος δὲ ὁ νοῦς καθὼ δημιουργεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ καθὼ πάσχει· πανταχοῦ γὰρ ἡ ποιητικὴ ἀρχὴ τῆς ὕλης τιμιώτερα, καὶ γίνεται μὲν, ὥσπερ ἔφην πολλάκις, ὁ αὐτὸς νοῦς καὶ νοητός, ὥσπερ ἡ ἐπιστήμη ἢ κατ' ἐνέργειαν αὐτὸ ἐστὶ τὸ ἐπιστητόν. (Themistius, *De Anima Paraphrase* [1899], 99.23–28); "That is why it also most resembles a god; for god is indeed in one respect [identical with] the actual things that exist, but in another their supplier (*chorêgos*). The intellect is far more valuable insofar as it creates than insofar as it is acted on; that is because the productive first principle is always more valuable than the matter [on which it acts]. Also, as I have often said, the intellect and the object of thought are identical (just as are actual knowledge and the very object of knowledge)" (ibid. [1996], 124–125). ولذلك قد يشبهه خاصة

In this way will be established the opinion of Alexander, according to which he says that to understand separate things comes about through conjoining of that intellect with us. This is not because understanding is found to exist in us after previously it did not, which is the cause in the conjoining of the agent intellect with us, as Ibn Bâjjah intended, but rather [it is because] the cause of intellection is conjoining, not the contrary.²⁷⁹

In virtue of this the question of how it understands what has long existed with a new intellection is solved. It is also evident from this why we are not conjoined with this intellect in the beginning but rather in the end. For so long as the form is in us in potency, it will be conjoined with us in potency and for so long as it is conjoined with us in potency, it is impossible for us to understand something in virtue of that. But when the form is made to exist in act in us (this will be in its conjoining in act), then we will understand all the things which we understand in virtue of [this intellect] and we will bring about the activity proper to ourselves in virtue of it.

From this it appears that its intellection is not something which belongs to the theoretical sciences but rather is something analogous with a thing [502] generated naturally by the learning of the theoretical sciences. For this reason it is not far-fetched that human beings help themselves in regard to this intellection, just as they help themselves in the theoretical sciences. But it is necessary for there to be found what arises from the theoretical sciences, not from others. For it is impossible for false intelligibles to have conjoining, since they are not something occurring naturally, but are things unintended, such as a sixth finger and a monster in creation.²⁸⁰

إِلَهًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ بِيَجْهَةِ مَا الْمَوْجُودَاتِ أَنْفُسَهَا وَبِيَجْهَةِ مَا الْمُنْعِمِ بِهَا. وَالْعَقْلُ مِنْ طَرِيقٍ مَا هُوَ يَصُوغُ أُخْرَى يَأْتِي بِكَوْنِ أَشْرَفٍ مِنْهُ مِنْ طَرِيقٍ مَا يَنْفَعِلُ فَإِنْ فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ الْمَبْدَأُ الْفَاعِلُ أَشْرَفُ مِنَ الْهَيُولَى وَيَصْبِرُ كَمَا قُلْتُ مَرَارًا كَثِيرَةً هُوَ بَعِينُهُ عَقْلًا وَمَعْقُولًا كَمَا أَنَّ الْعِلْمَ بِالْفِعْلِ هُوَ الْمَعْلُومُ نَفْسَهُ (ibid. [1973], 180.6–10). In his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, Averroes also speaks of God's knowledge as the cause of being: "The truth is that because it knows only itself, it knows the existents through the existence which is the cause of their existences. . . . For His knowledge is the cause of being and being is the cause of our knowledge." *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (1952), 1707–1708; (1962), 337 A–B. (1984), 197. Also see Druart (1995b).

279. Conjoining is a necessary condition for knowing. We do not have understanding so that we may conjoin with the separate agent intellect, as Ibn Bâjjah has it, but rather we conjoin with the separate agent intellect so that we may have understanding. The end, then, is intellectual understanding, which fulfills our natures as rational beings, and this is not a means to a greater end beyond our intellectual fulfillment.

280. The agent intellect brings to actuality as intelligibles only those which truly are naturally occurring intelligibles in potency, the images of which are formed thanks to the individual internal powers of imagination, cogitation, and memory and presented to the agent intellect. On the issue of "fictional forms" in Avicenna, see Black (1997).

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.²⁸¹ 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. This, therefore, appeared to us in regard to the way sought after. If more appears to us later on, we will write [it].²⁸² [503]

37. Let us, therefore, gather by way of summary the things which have been said in regard to the soul. Let us, therefore, say that the soul is in some way all beings. For beings are either intelligible or sensible. But knowing intelligible things is after the manner of sensing a sensible thing. (3.8, 431b20–23)

Since it has been explained what are the kinds of apprehensive powers of the soul and that they are of two sorts, namely, of sense and of intellect, it is necessary for us now to make a summary [account] concerning the soul and to say descriptively that it is in a way all beings. For all beings are either sen-

281. Cf. [454].

282. On this account, the agent intellect is our "form" in its actualization of the theoretical intelligibles in the individual human being's theoretical intellect. Because of the nature of this relationship of what is analogous to form (agent intellect) and what is analogous to matter (the individual's theoretical intellect), there are no grounds here for the assertion of personal immortality for individuals. While the agent intellect is the form and actuality of our intellects and understanding—that is, of our individual perishable theoretical intellects and of our imperishable shared material intellect—there is no substantial change transforming our individual generable and corruptible intellects into eternal substances, as al-Fârâbî had it. Nor is there here the denial of conjoining with the agent intellect and pessimism about the attainment of knowledge as a consequence of a denial of substantial conjoining, as al-Fârâbî is reported to have held in his late lost *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*. See n. 243.

In *Epistle 1 On Conjunction*, Averroes writes, "It is clear . . . that the agent intellect is not cause of the material intellect in as much as it is agent cause alone but in a way such that it is also its final perfection according to the mode of formal and final [cause], as is the case for sense in relation to what is sensed. This is one of the things which deceived al-Fârâbî, when he thought that [the agent intellect] was only the agent cause, as are material movers." Geoffroy and Steel (2001), 216. My translation of the French.