Walter Burley (ca. 1275-1344/5)
ON THE POWERS OF THE SOUL[1]

1 As the Philosopher says in *De anima* 2 [2.3.414a28-30], all of the powers of the soul belong to some animals, but other have only some, and others only one. There are in general five powers of the soul, namely, the vegetative power, the sensitive power, the intellective power, the appetitive power, and the power for local motion.

I

2 But all these powers belong to certain perfect animals, such as humans. And some of these powers belong to certain animals but in such as way as not to belong to all of them, so that all these powers but the intellective power belong to perfect brute animals. And some animate beings have only one of these powers, like plants, who have the vegetative power.

3 These aforesaid powers are natural powers and they are of the second species of quality.

4 The sufficiency of these powers can be understood in the following way: for just as the Philosopher says [*De anima* 2.4.415a16-21], powers are distinguished through their acts, and acts through their objects, and this is to be understood with respect to us, and not in an absolute sense (*simpliciter*). For we know powers through acts and acts through objects.

5 But now the object of the act of some power is a body united to a soul, and the object of the vegetative power is of this sort. For the vegetative power does not exercise its operation except upon a body united to a soul.

6 And the object of the act of a power is sensible being, and such is the object of the sensitive power.

7 And some object of some power is being in its commonality, and such an object is the object of the intellective power. For the intellective power can apprehend all being. But just as in natural things a natural appetite follows upon a naturally impressed form, so that an appetite for descending downward follows upon a heavy form, so too a certain inclination follows upon the form apprehended through sense or intellect.

8 Therefore over and above these three aforementioned powers it is necessary to posit a fourth power, namely, the appetitive power, by reason of which an inclination towards a good apprehended by sense or intellect follow upon

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[1] From the critical edition of M. J. Kitchel, "The 'De potentiis animae" of Walter Burley." *Mediaeval Studies* 33 (1971): 85-113.

apprehension. The object of a power of this sort is being insofar as it is good. Moreover, motion follows upon such an inclination, just as in natural things downward motion follows upon the inclination downward of what is heavy.

9 And therefore it is necessary to posit a fifth which is said to be the motive power through which an animal is moved to a good apprehended as something to be desired. The object of this power is being insofar as it is the term of desire. And thus it is clear how there are five types of powers of the soul.

II

10 But the grades of living are four because grades of living are distinguished according to types of living. But now the vegetative power alone belongs to some living things, like plants. But the sensitive power belongs to some living things without local motion, like imperfect animals, whereas the sensitive power belongs to other living things along with local motion, like perfect animals. And over and above these powers the intellective power belongs to some living things, such as humans.

11 But the appetitive power does not constitute a fifth grade because appetite always follows upon sensation, for in whatever sense is found, appetite is also found in that same thing, and vice versa. When speaking of appetite, it must be known that it is one power of the soul, and therefore the appetitive power does not constitute a distinct grade of living from the sensitive power.

III

12 But although there are four grades of living things, however there are only three of soul in general, namely, the vegetative soul, the sensitive soul, and the intellective soul. And this is because the soul, from the fact that it is the substantial form, gives the mode of being.

13 But now in living things there is found a threefold mode of being. One is the mode of material being, another is totally immaterial, and another is in a mode intermediately related to the other two.

14 The vegetative soul gives the mode of being materially. For the operations of the vegetative soul are concerned with the body, and are exercised through the mediation of a corporeal organ. And in this alone do the operations of the vegetative soul differ from the operations of inanimate things, the latter operations being from an extrinsic principle.

15 The sensitive soul gives the mode of being in a way intermediate between the material and the immaterial. For the species in the sensitive power is immaterial. However, it exists in a material way because it represents the thing insofar as it exists under material conditions.

16 But the intellective soul give the mode of being immaterially. For the species existing in the intellect exists without matter and without the conditions of matter.

17 Therefore it is clear in this way from what has been said that the types of soul are three generically, and that there are five types of powers of the soul, and four types of modes of living.

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V

23 Concerning the sensitive power, it is necessary to know that since powers are distinguished by their objects, as the Philosopher says, it is first necessary to make a determination about the sensible things which are the objects of the senses. And it is necessary to know that the sensible object is threefold, namely the proper sensible, the common sensible, and the incidental (*secundum accidens*) sensible.

24 The proper sensible is that which it no other sense can sense, and concerning which the sense cannot err. In this way colour is the object of the power of vision, because colour is not perceive by any other sense than by vision, and sight cannot err about colour, as will be seen later.

25 The common sensibles are five: motion, rest, number, figure, and magnitude. And they are called common sensibles because they are perceived by diverse senses, as is clear: magnitude can be perceive by sight and by touch, and likewise motion. However, things are not called common sensibles because they are perceived by any sense whatsoever, but rather, figure and magnitude are perceived only by sight and touch.

26 But things like "Diares's son" are called incidental (*per accidens*) sensibles. And they are called incidental because they are conjoined to what is sensible per se and they are not perceived except because a per se sensible is being sensed.

27 It must be known that a proper sensible and common sensible are per se sensibles. Hence the Philosopher first distinguishes the sensible into two

branches, namely into the per se and incidental sensible. And afterwards he distinguishes the per se sensible into the proper and the common.

VI

28 Concerning these sensibles there is first a doubt about the proper sensible. For it seems that the sense can err about the proper sensible, because vision may judge that something which is one colour is another colour. For it judges the sun to be one colour in the morning and other colour at noon, although this is not in fact the case.

29 It must be said that no sense is deceived concerning its first object. The first object of sight is the visible in its commonality, inasmuch as it extends to all visible things in their entirety. Hence the first object of the act of a power is the object adequated to it in such a way that nothing is contained under that object which cannot be perceived by that power, and everything which is perceived by such a power is contained under that adequate object. For in this way the visible is the first object of sight because everything visible can be perceived by sight, and nothing can be perceived by sight unless it is visible. And it cannot happen that a power can err concerning such an object. Hence sight does not judge something to be visible unless it is visible; however, it can happen that a power can err over what is contained beneath that object. And this can happen from three causes: either on account of the organ being indisposed; or on account of the medium being indisposed; or on account of the object being indisposed.

30 An example of the first: For in this way the taste of someone who is feverish is deceived about flavours, because the tongue of the feverish person is abundant in the choleric humour. Therefore the feverish person judges everything to be bitter. And this occurs because the organ of taste is indisposed.

31 An example of the second: For on account of the medium being indisposed, sight may judge the sun to be of different colours in the morning and at noon. For it judges the sun to be red at morning, and this is because in the morning the medium is indisposed and vaporous.

32 An example of the third: The sense can err over the object's conditions. For in this way vision judges the sun to be one food wide only, although the sun is much bigger than the earth.

33 Hence, to put it briefly, it does not happen that the sense errs concerning the object adequate to the sensitive potency; however it can err over what is contained under its adequate object on account of the aforesaid causes; but this is

an incidental object and not a per se object.

VII

34 Concerning the common sensibles there is a doubt as to whether they are sensible per se. To this doubt the Commentator [i.e. Averroes] replies by saying that the common sensibles are per se sensible because they are the subjects of the proper sensibles. And this is one cause, according to him. But there is another cause, according to him, because the common sensibles are sensed per se by the common sense.[2]

35 But against these causes it can be argued [as follows]: The first cause is not valid because in this way fire would be a per se sensible since it is the substance of its heat, which is a proper sensible; and substance would be a per se sensible, which is false. Nor is the second cause valid, because the common sense is immuted by the same things by which the proper sense is immuted, because all immutation of the proper sense terminate in the common sense. If, therefore, the common sensibles were sensed by the common sense, since they are sensed per se, then they would be sensed per se by the proper sensibles.

36 It must be said that the causes assigned by the Commentator as to why the common sensibles are per se sensibles are good ones. The first is good because according to the Philosopher, in *De anima* 2 [2.2.414a7], action does not belong to the form alone, nor to the matter alone, but per se and primarily it belongs to the whole composite. For he says that we are cured by health and also by the body. Therefore the common sensibles are the subjects of the proper sensibles and in this way they are like the matter of the proper sensibles, the composite of the common sensible plus the proper sensible is what first immutes the sense. And the common as much as the proper sensible immutes the sense per se.

37 Likewise the second cause is a good one because that which belongs to the species by reason of its genus belongs to it per se, although not primarily; but that which belongs to the species by reason of the specific difference belongs to it both per se and primarily. Hence, the sensible belongs to a human being per se but not primarily because it belongs to him by reason of [his being] an animal; but the visible belongs to a human being per se and primarily because it belongs to him by reason of a specific difference.[3] But now the proper senses perceive the common sensibles by reason of their genus, that is, by reason of sense in general (*sensus in commune*). For vision perceives magnitude not insofar as it is

[2] See *Great Commentary on De anima*, 2.5.133-34.

[3] I.e. because each of the five senses is a species of the genus of sense powers.

vision, but insofar as it is a sense. And therefore the common sensibles are perceived by the proper senses per se but not primarily.

38 To the objections it must be said to the first that something is the subject of a proper sensible either insofar as the proper sensible is one being or insofar as the proper sensible can immute the sense. That which is the subject of a proper sensible in the first way does not need to be sensed per se; but that which is the subject of the proper sensible in the second way is per se sensible. In the first way fire is the subject of heat, and in the second way magnitude is the subject of heat. But if heat were placed in fire without magnitude, it would not be sensed; whereas if heat were in magnitude without any other subject, it would still be sensed

39 To the second [the reply] is clear from the foregoing.Still there is a doubt as to whether all sensibles imprint their proper species in the sense, or are only sensed through the species of the proper sensibles. And it must be said that the common sensibles imprint their proper species in the sense, since a magnitude can be such a magnitude that it cannot be perceived by sight according to its totality. And this is because the eye in this case does not receive the species of the entire magnitude, but only the species of some part of that magnitude. And it sees that part whose species it receives. Hence the species of the right-hand part of the magnitude is received into the right-hand part, and the species of the left-hand part into the left.

40 But it must be known, however, that the common sensibles do not imprint their species into the sense except by virtue of proper sensibles. Whence even if a magnitude were posited without heat and without other proper sensibles, the magnitude could be perceived by no sense. And therefore common sensibles act on the sense per se but not primarily. But proper sensibles act on the sense per se and primarily.

41 Now that we have treated the sensibles in general, it is necessary to speak of the senses themselves specifically. Therefore it should be know that some of these are external sense, some internal. But first it is necessary to treat the external senses.

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XII

102 Now that we have treated the external senses, it is necessary to speak about the internal senses. Hence, according to Avicenna, in the *Sixth Book of*

Natural Philosophy [=*De anima*], there are five internal senses, namely, the common sense, the imaginative power, fantasy (*fantastica*), the estimative, and the memorative [powers]. These senses can be distinguished in this way: the common sense not only knows all the objects of the particular senses, but it also knows the differences of the objects of the diverse particular senses. Hence we know the distinction between bitter and sweet through the common sense, and this is something that no particular sense can perceive.

103 It should be known that there are two acts of the common sense: one is to know the diversity among the objects of the diverse particular senses, and the other is to know the act of the particular senses. Hence it is through the common sense, and not through vision, that one perceives oneself to see. That common sense is placed in the anterior part of the brain, where the sensitive nerves come together as if in a certain centre, which is the medulla, and which is moist according to Albert.

104 And it should be known that the common sense is not able to perform its own operations except through the proper senses, because, as Avicenna says, the common sense does not perceive anything unless the proper senses return to it with their wealth.

105 After that sense there is the imaginative power, which is not only able to do what the common sense does, but can also retain [what it perceive], since we can imagine a thing in its absence, which could not occur unless the imagination were to retain the species in the absence of the thing. It can also do more that the common sense, because the common sense cannot retain the species in the absence of the thing, or, if it does retain it, does so only for a while.

106 After the imagination there is the power of fantasy (*virtus fantastica*), which not only receives what the common sense produces, nor only retains what the power produces in the imagination, but composes one thing with another thing so that, because we see a mountain and we see gold, through our fantasy we have the ability to compose a golden mountain. For we compose and divide the intentions of things as much as phantasms. For we can make a human being with two heads, and the power through which we do this is the power of fantasy.

107 The fourth power is the estimative, which not only receives the species of sensibles, but also intentions which are not sensed. Friendship and hostility are the sort of thing which they call certain intentions beyond the sensibles, so that the sheep, seeing the wolf, immediately apprehends that it is harmful, and a natural enemy to it (*inimicum suae naturae*), not because it abhors the colour or shape of the wolf, but over and above its colour and shape the sheep discerns

(*aestimat*) something further in the wolf, namely, hostility. Hence in human beings that power is said to compare the particular intentions (*collativa intentionum particularium*); therefore it is called particular reason because it judges what is suitable and what is unsuitable. But in other animals, although it does not become properly a comparison, it is, however, something after the manner of comparison (*per modum collationis*). Of this power Avicenna says that it is apprehensive of the intentions which are not apprehended through sense, and therefore it receives species which have not been sensed. And Algazel says that the estimative power is a power apprehending what is not sensed in the sensed object (*de sensato quod non est sensatum*), like the sheep apprehends the hostility of the wolf. For this does not come about through the eye, but through another power which is in brute animals what the intellect is in humans. For just as someone knows something through the intellect which he does not know through sense, although he would not know it unless by receiving it from sense, so too does the estimative power know, although in an inferior way.

108 The fifth power is the memorative power, which is the storehouse of species as much as of intentions. In it are retained both the species of sensible forms and also those of intentions.

109 Hence according to Avicenna there are three ventricles in the brain: the first in the first part, the second in the middle part, and the third in the posterior part. And each one is divided [in turn] into an anterior and a posterior part. In the first part of the first ventricle is the common sense, and in its posterior part, the imagination. In the anterior part of the middle ventricle is the power of fantasy, and in the posterior part is the estimative power. In the first part of the third ventricle is the memorative power, and in the posterior part is the locomotive power.

110 The Commentator only posits four internal senses, namely, the common sense, fantasy, the estimative sense, and the memorative. Hence he posits the imaginative faculty and fantasy to be one sense. And that there should be these four powers in a perfect animal, is shown in this way by the Philosopher, in *De anima* 3 [3.6.432b20]: For nature is not lacking in necessary things, nor does it abound in what is superfluous; therefore it is necessary that there be as many operations in the animal as are necessary to it; otherwise nature would be lacking in something necessary. But now it is not only necessary for a perfect animal to receive the species of sensible things in their presence, but also to retain them in the absence of the sensibles. For since nourishment is necessary to all animals, but it is not always present, it is necessary for the perfect animal that it possess the species of suitable nourishment in the absence of nourishment, because unless the species of the sensible remained in the animal, the animal would not

be moved in their absence towards anything distant in seeking nourishment. We see the contrary of this in perfect animals, for they are moved to seek nourishment towards what they cannot attain through sight.

111 Therefore it is necessary for an animal to retain the species of the sensibles in their absence. But an animal cannot receive the species of the sensibles and preserve them all through the same faculty, as Avicenna proves, because bodies which are good receivers are poor retainers. For to receive and to preserve are, in the case of bodies, reduced to diverse principles, for the moist receives well but retains poorly, but the converse is true of the dry. And, therefore, since the sensitive powers are corporeal powers and have their being in a corporeal organ, it is necessary that the power which receives well, and that which retains well, be distinct.

112 The external senses along with the common sense serve the first operation; the fantasy and the memorative power serve the second. Hence the external sense along with the common sense receives the species of sensible forms, and fantasy preserves them; but the estimative power receives the species of intentions which are not sensed, and the memorative faculty retains them, as well as the species of sensible forms. This is what Avicenna wishes [to say] in the *Sixth Book of Natural Philosophy,* when he claims that the internal senses are either powers whose acts are concerned with the species of sensible forms, or whose acts are concerned with intentions that have not been sensed. If in the first way, then either as receiving, and this is the common sense, or as preserving, and this is fantasy; if in the second way, then this can be in two ways, either as receiving, and thus there is the estimative power; or as conserving, and thus there is the memorative.

113 It should be known that according to Avicenna, in part 4 of the *Sixth Book of Natural Philosophy,* that although every sense is receptive of the species without the matter, and in this way the sensitive power seems to be a sort of abstraction, however, in different powers this happens in different ways. For the external senses receive the sensible species without the matter in such a way that the matter of the form which is sensed is not in such a sense, except in the way in which wax receives the form of a golden ring without the gold. In that way the forms of sensible things are received into the sensitive power. But nonetheless, so long as the external sense has a species informing it, it always requires that form whose species it is actually to be in external matter. And the common sense requires that same condition. And therefore Avicenna says that this abstraction is imperfect. But imagination, because of the fact that it has the species of the thing without matter, does not require the form of whose species it is to be in external

matter, so long as the species is in the imagination, but whether the thing is present or absent, or totally destroyed, imagination can perform its operation through that species.

114 Therefore it is said that this imagination has the form in a more perfect abstraction than the external sense, although by this abstraction the connection and concomitance of accidents remains nonetheless. For imagination can imagine nothing unless under a determinate quantity and determinate qualities, and such things are called the attachments of matter according to Avicenna. And therefore, although an abstraction of this sort is a abstraction from matter, it is not, however, an abstraction from the attachments of matter.

115 But the estimative power has a still greater abstraction, because it received intentions which are not sensed, like friendship and hostility, goodness and evil, which are not, in themselves, material forms. They have, however, received a material being (*esse in materia*). But there is nonetheless not a total and perfect abstraction of form from matter and from the attachments of matter in this power, because it does not apprehend such forms except under singularity and being here and now, which are conditions of matter. But this power does not retain; therefore the memorative power is required, and in that is there more abstraction than in the estimative, because the estimative does not perceives anything except through the notion of presence (*per rationem praesentis*), but the memorative perceives through the notion of the past. Hence the first object of memory is the past as past, and therefore the memorative faculty is more abstract than any other sensitive power.

116 Concerning the memorative power there is a doubt as to whether memory is only of past things, and whether it is able to know all past things (*an sit omnium praeteritorum cognitiva*). And it must be known that not every cognition of the past is memory. For I know that the world came to be, and that I was born; I do not, however, remember these things. For I do not have memory with respect to these things; but for memory it is required that the one knowing the past had some act concerning it then, and therefore memory is the knowledge of the past insofar as it is the one remembering had some act concerning it then. And from this it is clear that there is not memory with respect to all past knowledge.

117 It must also be known that memory is had with respect to a twofold object, namely with respect to a proximate object, and with respect to a remote one. The proximate object of memory is the past act of the one remembering itself, but the remote object is the object of that past act. For example: I remember that I saw John existing here yesterday. The proximate object of that remembering is the

act of seeing John which I had yesterday; but the remote object is John, concerning whom I had that act. Therefore, the claim that was made, that memory is only of things past, is to be understood in this way, namely, that memory is only of past things with respect to the proximate object. However, memory can be of present things with respect to the remote object, because I can remember someone who can exist [now].

118 Moreover, it should be known that it is required for memory that the one remembering perceive the time that has lapsed between the remembering and the time of the cognition of the thing about which one has the memory. For if one does not perceive intermediate time (*tempus medium*), there is no memory, as is clear of those who were sleeping in Sardinia [*Physics* 218b23]. For they did not remember those whom that had killed earlier, because they did not perceive the intermediate time. And therefore the Philosopher says that memory does not belong to animals unless they can perceive time.

119 Still there is a doubt as to whether one ought to posit another power than these five internal powers, because recollection is a different power from memory, which is clear in two ways: because otherwise, there would be recollection in whatever [animals] there is memory, which is false, because memory belongs to all perfect animals, but recollection only belongs to human beings, as the Philosopher says. Likewise powers which require diverse corporeal dispositions are diverse; but memory and recollection require diverse corporeal dispositions because, according to the Philosopher, some people recollect well, but others remember well. For those who are slow have good memories, but others who are of quick genius recollect well. Therefore, etc.

120 However, the contrary is clear because the same thing is both the object of memory and of recollection, because the past as past is the object of both. To this it can be said that memory and recollection are diverse powers because memory is a continuous remembering (?),[4] but recollection is a sort of inquiry, successively proceeding from someting retained in the memory to the knowledge of what is sought. For example, if I know that I saw something yesterday but I do not know what I saw, from the fact that the knowledge of the act [of seeing it] is retained in memory, I can proceed to inquire after the knowledge of the object through recollection. Hence the Commentator says in his *De memoria* that memory is a certain act of remembering that is done suddenly, whereas recollection is an inquiry carried on by means of memory. And therefore forgetting is required for recollection, but not for memory.

[4] The edition is unclear here.

121 [In response] to the argument: when it is claimed that the object of both powers is the same, it must be said that the past is not the object of memory under the notion by which its species is conserved in memory, but the past is the object of recollection under the notion by which it is lapsed from memory and afterwards investigated through recollection from the knowledge of something which is retained in memory. And therefore the past is the object of each of them in different ways.

122 Otherwise it may be said that the very same powers are involved in memory and recollection, and they only vary accidentally, because memory is as if the term of motion, and recollection is like a motion to the term. Now something is moved by the same power to a certain place and preserved in that place, as it is clear that something heavy is moved downwards and kept in a downward place by the same power. Thus memory and recollection will be the same power, since the species is retained through memory and acquired through recollection from that [same] part. The arguments given only prove that memory and recollection vary accidentally.