

**Siger of Brabant**

***QUESTIONS ON THE LIBER DE CAUSIS***<sup>1</sup>

*Question 26: Whether the Human Soul is Impressed  
on the Body as a Form and Perfection*

**/105**

*Solution.* Some people want [to say] that the substance of the intellectualive soul is the form of a human being, but the power of the intellectualive soul is separate, not the perfection of matter nor having an organ. And in support of this position those positing it bring forth the following arguments: for that from which a human being understands must be the form of a human being; but that from which he understands is separate, immaterial, and has no organ which is its perfection, like sensing and loving; [thus it is ] is a power separate from matter.

But this position cannot stand. For since the intellectualive soul is the form and perfection of a human being, as is the truth of the matter, it cannot be a separate power and operation. For matter, which is a being through some form, can be acted upon and acts by the power and operation of that form.

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**/106**

Therefore one must say something different, that the intellectualive soul is the perfection and form of the body, not however in such a way that its power is separate; rather, since its substance is the act and perfection of its matter, so too of its power as well. Hence Aristotle introduced a definition saying that the soul is actuality in the case of the faculties of the soul (*in partibus potestativis animae*), both in the case of the intellectualive faculty and in the others; for the substance and form are only known from the power and operation. Thus if the power and operation were entirely separate, and in no way the act and perfection of matter, then in turn neither is the substance of which it is the operation and power.

But it must be noted that the intellectualive soul is the perfection and form of the body, but not, however, in the same way as the vegetative and sensitive souls. For the intellectualive soul perfects the body in such a way that it also subsists in

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itself in its being, and is independent of matter and is not educed from the power of matter. But the vegetative and sensitive are perfections of matter in this way, that they do not subsist through themselves and they depend on matter in their being, since they are educed from the power of matter through the generation of the composite, through the transmutation of matter into its actuality and perfection.

*Question 27: Whether the Intellect is Multiplied by  
by the Multiplication of Human Beings  
or Whether it is One in All*

**/108**

Next the question of the multiplication of souls is raised, namely, the question of whether the intellect is multiplied by the multiplication of human beings or whether there is one intellect for all human beings. And it seems that there is one intellect for all humans. An immaterial form is not multiplied amongst things diverse in number but agreeing in species, because the difference in number is a difference through matter. But the intellect is an immaterial form, since it is in potency to all material forms, understanding them in potency before understanding them in act, as is said in *De anima* III. Therefore the intellect is not multiplied through things diverse in number but agreeing in species.

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**/111**

*Solution.* The Commentator, as is clear from Bk. 3 of his *De anima*, thought that the intellect is one in number for all human beings, and he was led to conclude this because of the fact that those things which differ in number differ in this way because their being is received into diverse matters, which differ quantitatively. But he believed that the intellect is separate (*abstractus*) in its being and a form subsisting in its being through itself. And therefore it seemed to him that the intellect cannot have its being numbered by matter, since its being is not through matter, nor is it materially individuated. The Commentator also posited that the understanding of Socrates and the understanding of Plato insofar

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as they understand the same nature at the same time, such as the nature of a stone, is not a distinct understanding according to the subject of the understanding itself, nor is it diverse according to the intelligible form itself absolutely, but he posited that the understanding of Socrates and Plato inasmuch as they understand the same nature simultaneously is diverse according to the diversity of intelligible species, not absolutely,<sup>112</sup> but relatively; for understanding, insofar as it is by an intelligible form [which comes] from the phantasm which is in Socrates, is the understanding of Socrates and common to the intellect and the body of Socrates, since it cannot occur without a corporeal phantasm belonging to Socrates himself; but understanding inasmuch as it [comes] from an intelligible species caused by Plato's phantasms, is Plato's understanding, and common to Plato's intellect and his body; but to understand from Socrates' phantasm is not to understand from Plato's phantasms; and therefore Socrates understanding a stone is not the same as Plato understanding a stone. For Averroes did not posit that the body shares in understanding in such a way that it is its subject, nor does the intellect need the body as a corporeal subject for understanding, but more as an object, to which the intellect is naturally united. For he says that understanding is common in the sense that it does not occur without a phantasm. And therefore he says that Socrates shares in an understanding in which Plato does not share, and that by which he understands he does not understand inasmuch as the intellect understands from the phantasms of Socrates. And in this way he wished to avoid [the consequence that] when Socrates knows something Plato must also know it, since it is not necessary that the intellect which understands according as it is in this body and not without the images of this body, should understand in another body from the phantasms of this same body.

But this position is heretical in our faith, and it is also irrational, as is clear in this way. For since the intellect exists as the form of the body, as Aristotle intends generally of the soul, it is clear enough how the intellect must be numbered and multiplied by the multiplication of human bodies; and however anyone posits this [to occur], it is clear that the intellect cannot be one in number for all human beings. And this can be argued as follows: Every form united to matter by such a union that, being one existent, it is not able to be united to diverse matters, must necessarily be multiplied when its matter is multiplied, since whatever is united to its matter and under this unity cannot do this. But the intellect is united to the human body in this way, so that existing under a unity it

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cannot be united to many humans or to many human bodies. Therefore it is necessary for it to be multiplied by the multiplication of human bodies to which it is united, and that multiplication of it will be into intellects differing in number and agreeing in species, since it is accompanied by a union to matter. Therefore the intellect must be numbered and multiplied. The proof of the minor is: the intellect is united to the body in such a way that the intellect does not understand without a phantasm, in such a way that its operation shares with the body. But the intellect cannot understand many things simultaneously, but rather it turns from one intelligible to another according as it wishes to understand diverse things. For as Algazel says, for the intellect to understand many things in actuality simultaneously would be like the same matter being shaped simultaneously into actually different shapes, such as the shape of a triangle and the shape of a quadrangle. Hence just as matter which is numerically one is receptive of many forms, and perfectible through them, but nonetheless it is not simultaneously and actually perfected through diverse and opposite [forms], such as through the form of air and fire, so too a single existent intellect perfectible through diverse intelligible species is not actually and simultaneously perfected through diverse intelligible species, by considering many and diverse [species] simultaneously and actually. But now it happens in diverse human beings that the sensitive powers which serve the intellect consider, remember, and imagine diverse things, from which it also happens that diverse human beings understand diverse things simultaneously, so that while one person understands one thing another person understands another. For the intellect always understands with respect to what is from itself, and there is no defect on the part of the things by which the inferior powers serve it. Therefore since one existent cannot share in diverse human beings, it is clear that [the intellect] shares in human bodies with the sort of sharing which one thing existing in many cannot share.