

# Consciousness and Self-Knowledge in Aquinas's Critique of Averroes's Psychology\*

## I. Outline of the Problem

Aquinas's attacks on the Averroist doctrine of the unicity of the human intellect are many and varied, and they appear in a wide variety of works spanning the entire course of Aquinas's career.<sup>1</sup> Some texts, such as the *Summa theologiae* and the *Commentary on the "De anima,"* present only a few central and measured objections to Averroes's position; others, such as the *Summa contra gentiles* and *De unitate intellectus*, proliferate and repeat a plethora of arguments, many of which are cast in a markedly polemical tone.<sup>2</sup> Yet there is one basic theme that is

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<sup>1</sup> "Unicity of the intellect" refers to the doctrine, defended by Averroes in late works such as the *Long Commentary on the "De anima,"* that the possible (or, in medieval terminology, material) intellect, posited by Aristotle in *De anima* 3.4, is a single separate substance shared by all individual human knowers. See *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. S. Crawford (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), Bk. 3, comm. 1-16, 379.1-436.40. The Arabic original of this text (hereafter referred to as *Long Commentary*) does not survive. The key Averroist arguments (minus Averroes's polemics against his predecessors) are translated by Arthur Hyman in A. Hyman and J. J. Walsh, eds., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1973), 324-34. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Averroes's and Aquinas's works are my own.

A clear summary of Averroes's position on unicity as it is found in the *Long Commentary* is given by Arthur Hyman, "Aristotle's Theory of the Intellect and Its Interpretation by Averroes," in D. J. O'Meara, ed., *Studies in Aristotle*, *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, vol. 9 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 161-91; for a more detailed discussion of the various views taken by Averroes at different stages in his life, see H. A. Davidson, "Averroes on the Material Intellect," *Viator* 17 (1986): 91-137.

<sup>2</sup> The principal texts in which the criticisms of Averroes are contained are as follows: *Summa theologiae* (ST), 1a pars, q. 76, aa. 1-2; *Summa contra gentiles* (SCG), Bk. 2, chaps. 59, 73, 75; *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*; *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, qq. 2-3; *Sentencia libri De anima*, Bk. 3, cap. 1 (=Bk. 3, lect. 7); *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, Bk. 2, dist. 17, q. 2, a. 1; *Compendium theologiae* (CT), q. 85. All references are to the Leonine editions of these texts, with the following exceptions: (1) I have provided parallel references, for the sake of convenience, to the paragraph numbers of the edition of the *De unitate intellectus* by L. W. Keeler (Rome: Gregorian University, 1936); and to the book, lecture, and paragraph numbers of the edition of Aquinas's *De anima* commentary by A. M. Pirota, *In Aristotelis librum De anima commentarium* (Turin: Marietti, 1959); (2) I have used the edition of the *Quaestiones de anima* by J. H. Robb (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968); (3) I have used the edition of the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* by P. Mandonnet and M.-F. Moos, 4 vols. (Paris: Lethielleux, 1929-47); and (4) I have used the Ottawa edition of the *Summa theologiae* (Ottawa: Collège Dominicain, 1941-45).

repeated by Aquinas in almost every work in which unicity is discussed. Over and over again, Aquinas proclaims that Averroes's view that the material or possible intellect is one for all human knowers is unable to explain the most basic of psychological facts, which Aquinas generally expresses by the phrase, *hic homo (singularis) intelligit* "this individual human being understands".<sup>3</sup> Averroes's position, it is charged, robs individual human subjects of their claim to possess, in their own right, those acts of intellectual cognition that make them essentially rational beings.

Intuitively, one cannot help but be strongly sympathetic with Aquinas's preoccupation with such an objection. For it appears that he has recognized a fundamental flaw in the Averroist noetic: its inability to account for the datum of individual consciousness of thought, the experience of intellectual self-awareness.<sup>4</sup> Aquinas's appeal to that self-awareness seems to cut through the philosophical and exegetical gulf that separates him from Averroes, resting as it does upon a basic human experience that all of us, philosophers or not, readily acknowledge as real and central to our humanity.<sup>5</sup> Its purported epistemological and metaphysical neutrality appear to

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I have also used the following English translations of Aquinas: *Questions on the Soul*, trans. J. H. Robb (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984); *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists*, trans. Beatrice Zedler (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1968); *Summa contra gentiles*, trans. Anton Pegis et al., 4 vols. (1956; reprint, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

I have not used the parallel text in *De spiritualibus creaturis*, q. 9, since Aquinas's discussion in this text focuses primarily on metaphysical issues.

<sup>3</sup> The adjective *singularis* is usually omitted, as in *ST* 1.76.1; *In 3 De anima*, chap. 1, 205b282 (lect.7, n. 690); *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 3, 303b60, 96; 304a117-118 (§§63, 65, 66); *CT* 1.85, 109a46-47, 50. Of the texts used in this study, it is included only in *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 3, 303a27-28 (§62).

<sup>4</sup> Fernand Van Steenberghen, for example, emphasizes the central importance of this appeal to consciousness in Aquinas's reaction to Averroes, giving it the striking, if somewhat misleading, designation of an appeal to the *cogito*. See *Thomas Aquinas and Radical Aristotelianism* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1980), 47-48.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48: "Again, we are not dealing with a mere hypothesis, or a theory invented out of thin air to solve a particular problem or to save a religious doctrine. It is rather a metaphysical conclusion required by the data of consciousness."

Even Averroes's own expositors are daunted by the problem of consciousness. See for example H. A. Davidson, "Averroes on the Material Intellect," 120. Davidson's suggestion that such a point is raised in Averroes's own *Epitome of the "De anima"* is not fully explained. The reference given is to a passage where Averroes is raising the familiar problem of how a Themistian view of an eternal intellect can account for the phenomenon of the generability and corruptibility of knowledge. See the *Talkhīṣkitāb al-naḥs*, ed. A.F. Al-Ahwani (Cairo: Maktabah al-Nahdah al-Misriyah, 1950), 87.9-23. (This passage represents one of Averroes's later interpolations into the

make this argument unassailable.

But is such an appeal to consciousness as epistemologically neutral as it at first seems? Is the fact that each of us claims a personal experience of intellectual knowing sufficient proof that the Averroist view of unicity is untenable? In the present discussion I will argue that within the Aristotelian framework which Aquinas and Averroes share, the psychological explanation and interpretation of intellectual consciousness is not itself a given, even if the experience of consciousness is. Consciousness of thinking may play a central role in Cartesian philosophy, and in the system of Averroes's and Aquinas's predecessor, Avicenna.<sup>6</sup> But it has no such privileged status in the philosophies of Aristotle, Averroes, or Aquinas, in which the possible intellect "is actually nothing before it thinks," and is only able to think itself after it has been actualized by some other object.<sup>7</sup> Given this Aristotelian insistence on the indirectness of intellectual self-

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*Epitome*.) While closely related to the issue of individual consciousness, the two problems are not identical. Moreover, in the *Long Commentary*, Averroes argues that his doctrine of the dual subject remedies exactly these concerns. See Bk. 3, comm. 5, 406.566-407.583.

<sup>6</sup> For the Avicennian equivalent to the *cogito* of Descartes, the "Flying Man" argument, see Th.-A. Druart, "The Soul-Body Problem: Avicenna and Descartes," in idem, ed., *Arabic Philosophy and the West: Continuity and Interaction* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1988), 27-49, esp. 31-38; and M. E. Marmura, "Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context," *Monist* 69 (1986): 383-95.

It is significant that even in the philosophies of both Descartes and Avicenna, considerable reflection is necessary before the immediate awareness that the intellect has of itself yields any determinate philosophical content. In Avicenna, the soul must be alerted to its innate self-awareness, and Avicenna emphasizes that the second-order awareness that this alerting yields is acquired, not innate. See *Al-Ta'liqāt* (Notes), ed. A. R. Badawi (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1973), 79-80; 147-48. In Descartes, several meditations are necessary before the certitude of the *cogito* can be translated into any clear and distinct knowledge of what sort of being it is who necessarily thinks and exists—in the *Meditations*, the identification of the self with the mind is not fully demonstrated until the sixth meditation. Moreover, the Cartesian experience of thinking is construed in a broad, Platonic fashion, to include not only acts of intellection, but also voluntary acts, and imagination and sensation as well. On this point, see, for example, *Meditations on First Philosophy, Second Meditation*, in vol. 7 of Charles Adams and Paul Tannery, eds., *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 13 vols. (Paris: Vrin, 1896), 28.20-29.18.

<sup>7</sup> *De anima* 3.4.429b31, and in general, 429b29-430a5. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of the *De anima* are from the version of D.W. Hamlyn, *Aristotle's De anima: Books 2 and 3* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968). Cf. also 429a22-24. The passage at 429b5-9 is often read according to Bywater's emendation, as *di'autou*, rather than *de autou* with the manuscripts. On the latter reading, it too states that the intellect can only think itself after it has thought another object; on the emended reading, it makes an entirely different point, namely, that once the intellect has been actualized by an object, it is able to think that object at will. The Latin translation edited by Gauthier in the new Leonine edition of Aquinas's commentary renders the passage in accordance with the manuscripts: "Et ipse autem se ipsum tunc potest intelligere" (3.2, 209). The text in the Latin translation of Averroes's *Long Commentary*, however, reads in accordance with the emendation: "Et ipse tunc potest intelligere per se" (Bk. 3, text 8, 419.5-6); but Averroes interprets it as an allusion to self-knowledge nonetheless (420.18-36).

awareness, Averroes can save the *phenomenon* of a personal consciousness of thinking even though he denies the existence of a personal intellect. He is able to do so, I will argue, by attending to certain unique features of the intellect's fundamental dependence upon the imagination, features which imply that every act of intellectual consciousness is inextricably tied to a corresponding act of imaginative or sensible consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

In order to offer such a defense of Averroes, I will begin by examining two of Aquinas's principal objections to Averroes's doctrine of unicity which bear upon the problem of accounting for consciousness. I will argue that the first of these objections is inconclusive, and incompatible with Aquinas's own acceptance of Aristotle's view that consciousness of intellection as such is derivative and indirect. As to the second objection, I will attempt to show how Averroes's

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On the derivative character of Aristotelian self-knowledge, cf. Joseph Owens, "The Self in Aristotle," *Review of Metaphysics* 41 (June 1988): 707-22: ". . . Aristotle's epistemology allows no direct self-knowledge to the cognitive agent. Human cognition is always directly of something else. It is aware of itself only concomitantly, and even then in terms of the external sensible things that are its direct object" (707); and, "Despite the difficulties in explaining the nature of a self of which one has no direct knowledge, there is not the least doubt in the Aristotelian text regarding the immediate factual awareness of oneself as a unitary cognitive and moral agent. The problem springs rather from an epistemological setting that precludes any direct knowledge of the nature of the agent self, namely, knowledge of *what* the agent is" (708).

<sup>8</sup> It is not insignificant that recent research into the notion of consciousness in Aristotle has also reached the conclusion that if one follows Aristotle's principles through, a faculty other than the intellect must be assigned responsibility for personal consciousness, including consciousness of thinking. Charles H. Kahn, "Sensation and Consciousness in Aristotle," *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 4, *Psychology and Aesthetics*, ed. Jonathan Barnes et al., 1-31 (London: Duckworth, 1978), argues that "[i]n Aristotle's view, our personal consciousness as men belongs essentially to our sentient, animal nature; so that whereas sensation and the awareness of sensation are simultaneous (and really identical) acts of the same faculty, reasoning and the awareness of reasoning belong properly to different faculties, and the two acts coincide only in so far as the faculties of sense and intellect are concretely united in the *psuchê* of a particular man. This point is of relatively little importance for the theory of sensation, but of very great importance for the doctrine of the 'separate intellect'" (31). Kahn has recently explored the consequences of this position for Aristotle's account of thinking in "Aristotle on Thinking," in *Essays on Aristotle's "De anima"*, ed M. C. Nussbaum and A. O. Rorty (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 359-79; see especially the remarks on 375, where Kahn concludes, "*Noôsis* is not an act which I perform but an act that takes place in me. But the fact that I am an animal in which such events can, and occasionally do, take place, is a fundamental fact that colors every aspect of my conscious perceptual experience."

More specifically, Deborah Modrak has argued that the common sense (*koinê aisthêsis*) is the "most likely candidate" for a general faculty of consciousness, including consciousness of thinking. See "An Aristotelian Theory of Consciousness?" *Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1981): 160-70, esp. 161, 164-6. See also idem, *Aristotle: The Power of Perception* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 133-54, esp. 142-44, in which Modrak refers explicitly to the Aristotelian principle that thought always employs a phantasm, so that "[f]or every act of thinking there is a simultaneous act of the perceptual faculty and a single state of awareness of a single object represented sensorially and abstractly."

development of the interrelations between imagination and intellection allows him to overcome the difficulties that Aquinas raises. I will also argue that here, as on the first point, Aquinas's objections run contrary to his own express declarations of the indispensability of imagination for the exercise of thought. Finally, I will suggest how certain key features of the interpretation of Aristotle's view of the imagination in the tradition of Islamic Aristotelianism which Averroes follows help to explain his ability to accord a central role to imagination in accounting for a peculiarly human form of consciousness.

Finally, two methodological notes are in order. First, it is necessary to emphasize that the argument I will offer is focused solely on Averroes's ability to "save the phenomenon," that is, to offer a plausible account of the datum or experience of individual, personal consciousness of thinking. I am not concerned here with the metaphysical, ethical, or religious implications of Averroes's views, all of which Aquinas takes issue with in some manner. Apart from the need to limit the scope of my discussion, the reason for this narrow focus is simple: despite Aquinas's enormous debt to Averroes in his reading of Aristotle in a number of areas, on this particular issue Averroes and Aquinas often base their views on radically different principles, and they often have radically different notions of what metaphysical, ethical, and religious consequences can be accepted from a philosophical doctrine. Only the common human experience of intellectual consciousness is assured of being a neutral vantage point for an inquiry such as the present one.

Secondly, because I wish to construct a positive case for Averroes's position, I will base my remarks not only on the text of the *Long Commentary on the "De anima,"* which was available to Aquinas in Latin translation, but also on earlier psychological treatises, such as the *Epitome* and *Middle Commentary* on the *De anima.*<sup>9</sup> This is necessary in part because some of the most

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<sup>9</sup> I have used the Ahwani edition of the *Epitome of the "De anima"* (see n. 5 above). The only translation of this text into a Western language is the Spanish translation by Salvador Gómez Nogales, *La psicología de Averroes: Comentario al libro Sobre el alma de Aristóteles* (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1987).

striking expressions of Averroes's views on the links between imagination and intellect occur in these other commentaries; it is also necessary in order to show that, despite the many shifts in Averroes's overall reading of Aristotle's notion of the possible intellect, this aspect of his epistemology and psychology remains constant. And since it is not my contention that Aquinas misinterpreted or misrepresented Averroes's views in the areas upon which this study focuses, but only that Aquinas ignores some of his own basic epistemological positions in his polemic against Averroes, there is no injustice done to Aquinas by using works of Averroes to which he himself had no access.

## II. Aquinas's Objections Relating to Consciousness

**1. *Hic homo intelligit*:** Of Aquinas's many objections to Averroes's doctrine of unicity, I will focus upon the following two arguments which bear upon the problem of intellectual consciousness: (1) the fundamental appeal to the datum of the individual experience of thought, *hic homo intelligit*; and (2) the charge that Averroes's focus on the individuality of the phantasm transforms the individual human knower from a knowing subject into an object of knowledge for a separate substance.

Aquinas's fondness for repeating the maxim, "This (individual) human being understands" need not, of itself, indicate a desire to appeal to the experience of intellectual self-awareness, although this has generally been assumed to be Aquinas's intention. Strictly speaking, the maxim only refers to the *individuality* of thinking: it makes no explicit mention of the *awareness* of thinking, and it is formulated by Aquinas in the third, not the first, person. In most of the texts in which the phrase is used, Aquinas tends to develop his argument in metaphysical terms: the principle of operation by which any being acts is its form; but a single possible intellect shared by many individuals can only equivocally be said to be the form of those individuals as

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Averroes's *Middle Commentary* (properly entitled *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-naḥs*, the title erroneously given to the *Epitome* in Ahwani's edition), is being edited and translated by Alfred Ivry of New York University, to whom I am grateful for allowing me access to a pre-publication copy of both text and translation. For the *Long Commentary*, see n. 1 above.

individuals; hence, the doctrine of unicity fails to explain how individual human knowers can be said to possess, as part of their metaphysical constitutions, their own formal principle of intellection.<sup>10</sup>

That the datum of consciousness is indeed an important aspect of Aquinas's repeated invocation of this maxim is made clear in q. 76, a. 1 of the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, where Aquinas explicitly alludes to individual self-awareness as part of his argument that "this human being understands because the intellectual principle is his form" (*hic homo intelligit, quia principium intellectivum est forma ipsius*). In considering the question, "Whether the intellectual principle is united to the body as its form," Aquinas argues that those who wish to offer a negative reply will have difficulty when they attempt to attribute the activity of intellection to *this human being*.<sup>11</sup> Aquinas then brings in an explicit appeal to the experience of consciousness; this appeal serves the purpose of supporting the contention that the activity of intellection does indeed belong to the individual human knower as a concrete, hylemorphic composite: "For each one of us experiences himself to be the one who understands" (*experitur enim unusquisque seipsum esse qui intelligit*).

At this point, Aquinas does not have Averroes in mind as an adversary, for he goes on to consider how this experience of consciousness bears upon the Platonic identification of the individual with the intellect alone. The Platonic problem, however, is certainly not that of explaining the individual's consciousness of thinking: rather, Aquinas argues that it is the *unity* of consciousness that the Platonic view of human nature violates. By identifying the whole person with the intellect, the Platonist is unable to account for the equally obvious fact that "it is

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<sup>10</sup> This is the gist of the arguments in *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 3, 303a24-304a118 (§§62-66); *In 3 De anima*, chap. 1, 205b282-206a305 (lect. 7, n. 690); and *CT* 1.85.108a42-62. This emphasis also appears in the *Quaestiones de anima*, q. 3, where the phrase, "this or that human being" (*hujus vel illius hominis/hic homo vel ille/hujus hominis . . . et illius*; (82-83; Robb trans., 70-71) is used instead of *hic homo intelligit*.

<sup>11</sup> *ST* 1.76.1: "Si quis autem velit dicere animam intellectivam non esse corporis formam, oportet quod inveniat modum quo ista actio quae est intelligere, sit huius hominis actio." As in the other texts where Aquinas invokes this maxim, it is clear that here he remains interested in the metaphysical problem of a thing's form as the principle of its operation.

the very same person who perceives himself to understand and to sense’’ (*ipse idem homo est qui percipit se intelligere et sentire*). For sensation depends for its occurrence upon the body, not upon intellect alone; hence, if the intellect is not the form of the body, then it cannot account for the identity between the agent who senses through the body, and who understands through the intellect.<sup>12</sup>

Only at this point does Aquinas turn his attention on Averroes, who, surprisingly, is viewed at first as an ally: he concedes, against Plato, that the intellect is a part of an individual human being “in some way’’ united to a body. But, Aquinas charges, Averroes’s notion of conjunction through phantasms destroys the very phenomenon of individual intellectual consciousness that intellect-body unity presupposes, and is therefore self-defeating. At this point, Aquinas launches into the second of the two objections which I intend to consider in this discussion, namely, that Averroes’s doctrine of unicity objectifies individual human beings and thereby negates their claim to be intellectual beings in their own right. I will consider the argument by which Aquinas attempts to substantiate this charge in section 3 below. Before doing so, however, a few observations are in order regarding the overall tenor of Aquinas’s appeal to the individual experience of consciousness as it occurs explicitly in this article of the *Summa theologiae*, and implicitly in Aquinas’s other appeals to the maxim, “This individual human being understands.”

**2. Aquinas’s Views on Intellectual Awareness:** One of the most striking features of Aquinas’s allusion to individual intellectual consciousness in *Summa theologiae* 1.76.1 is the nature of the verbs which Aquinas chooses to describe the act of cognition by which individuals are cognizant of their own intellectual activity. Aquinas says initially that each person “experiences’’

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<sup>12</sup> Aquinas’s critique of the Platonic position on these grounds is not entirely convincing, given that he understands the Platonic view to be that sensation is an activity of the soul alone, and not of the body. Aquinas is familiar with this reading of Plato through Augustine (although Aquinas argues Augustine merely reports Plato’s view). See for example *ST* 1.77.5 ad 3m: “[O]pinio Platonis fuit quod sentire est operatio animae propria, sicut et intelligere. In multis autem quae ad philosophiam pertinent, Augustinus utitur opinionibus Platonis, non asserendo, sed recitando.” Thus, if both intellection and sensation are activities of the soul alone, the Platonist can preserve the unity of consciousness on both cognitive levels.



(*experitur*) that it is he who understands; in referring to the unity of consciousness, Aquinas says that the same person “perceives” (*percipit*) himself both to understand (*intelligere*) and to sense (*sentire*).<sup>13</sup> Aquinas seems deliberately to avoid using verbs that signify intellectual comprehension, such as *intelligere*, to describe the acts whereby individuals are conscious of their various activities. In the context of this particular question, this may be due in part to the combined attack on the Averroist and Platonic positions, since the refutation of Platonism involves the problem of sensible awareness as much as intellectual awareness. Nonetheless, both “experience” and “perceive” are predicated of intellection along with sensation in the passages just cited. Nor is such usage an anomaly in this particular discussion; rather, it reflects Aquinas’s usual practice in his principal discussions of the soul’s self-knowledge. Given the importance of the appeal to the experience of consciousness in Aquinas’s anti-Averroist polemic, his use of such language in these contexts would seem to merit closer scrutiny.

The problem of self-knowledge is discussed by Aquinas in a small number of texts in which the principal concern is to reconcile the Augustinian and Aristotelian approaches to the soul’s knowledge of itself.<sup>14</sup> In none of these texts does Aquinas show any interest in the implications of this issue for the problem of the unicity of the intellect. Moreover, the reconciliation on which Aquinas settles is heavily weighted in Aristotle’s favor, that is, against any direct self-knowledge by the intellect, and in favor of intellectual self-knowledge by way of reflection. The result is that

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<sup>13</sup> *ST* 1.76.1: “[E]xperitur enim unusquisque seipsum esse qui intelligit”; “ipse idem homo est qui percipit se intelligere et sentire.”

<sup>14</sup> The principal texts on self-knowledge are *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, ed. A. Dondaine, 3 vols., vol. 22 of *Opera omnia* (Rome: Leonine Commission, 1970-76), q. 10, a. 8; *Summa theologiae*, 1.87.1; and *Summa contra gentiles*, 3.46. There is also a further disputed question on this topic believed to be by Aquinas, ed. by L. A. Kennedy, “The Soul’s Knowledge of Itself: An Unpublished Work Attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas,” *Vivarium* 15 (1977): 31-45. Its authenticity has recently been called into question by F.-X. Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion chez Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 305-310. Apart from Putallaz’s monograph devoted to the subject of self-knowledge in Aquinas, the following recent works are of note: R. T. Lambert, “Habitual Knowledge of the Soul in Thomas Aquinas,” *Modern Schoolman* 60 (1982): 1-19; James Reichmann, “The ‘Cogito’ in St. Thomas: Truth in Aquinas and Descartes,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (1986): 341-52; and Mark Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1986), chap. 4.2, 125-135. For a convenient overview of earlier debates on how to interpret Aquinas on self-knowledge, see 242 n. 7 of Jordan’s book.

in such contexts Aquinas is at pains to *downplay* the soul's direct experiential knowledge of itself and its acts as a means of gaining essential knowledge of the soul's nature. For this knowledge, Aquinas says in the *Summa theologiae*, "the presence of the mind does not suffice, but rather, diligent and subtle inquiry is required."<sup>15</sup>

Although the approach and structure of each of Aquinas's principal treatments of the soul's knowledge of itself varies, all of the texts concede the indirect and secondary character of any knowledge of the soul's nature. Moreover, to the extent that these texts attempt to salvage some place for the Augustinian notion of the soul's essential knowledge of itself, all of them carefully restrict the vocabulary used to describe such knowledge to vague terms like *percipere*. For our present purposes, this can best be seen by focusing upon the accounts of the *Summa theologiae* and *De veritate*.

In the *Summa* account, Aquinas bases his determination of whether the intellect knows itself "through its essence" (*per suam essentiam*) upon the epistemological principle that the proper object of the embodied human intellect is the quiddity of a material thing; since this is the case, the intellect is only actualized in knowing material substances. As in Aristotle, then, the essence of a human intellect is not something fully actual in itself, and so the human intellect cannot know itself through its essence, but only through its act. Here Aquinas goes on to distinguish two different ways in which the soul knows itself through its act, one particular, the other universal. The universal type yields the sort of knowledge of the nature of the human mind that is given by a psychological and philosophical analysis of human intellectual operations: it is the sort which Aquinas identifies as involving "diligent and subtle inquiry." By contrast, the particular knowledge that the intellect has of itself through its act refers to the simple act of self-awareness, "according to which Socrates or Plato perceives himself to have an intellective soul, from the fact that he perceives himself to understand" (*percipit se intelligere*). For this sort of knowledge,

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<sup>15</sup> *ST* 1.87.1: "[N]on sufficit eius praesentia, sed requiritur diligens et subtilis inquisitio."

unlike the other, “the presence itself of the mind (*ipsa mentis praesentia*), which is the principle of the act by which the mind perceives itself, suffices.”<sup>16</sup>

In the *Summa* account, then, Aquinas denies the soul any sort of direct *essential* awareness of itself. To the extent that he concedes some sort of direct self-knowledge in the soul conditioned by its mere presence to itself, Aquinas opts to describe this as an act of perception—not in order to indicate that it is a sensible act, but rather, in order to indicate its vague, inchoate nature, its lack of any real content.<sup>17</sup> And although Aquinas does refer to this as the perception by individual knowers that they have *intellective souls*, and presumably personal ones, nothing in Aquinas’s description of this knowledge itself indicates that it conveys any determinate information about the intellectual soul as such. Rather, Aquinas describes it as a perception of an intellectual soul because his own “diligent and subtle inquiry” elsewhere into the nature of the soul has led him to conclude that this is in fact what the soul is aware of when it is aware of itself. But the simple experience of the presence of the soul does not of itself yield any such determinate information. And Aquinas’s general tendency to speak of the *soul’s* or the *mind’s* knowledge of itself, rather than the intellect’s self-knowledge, seems to reflect the same

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> The use of *percipere* here probably reflects the parallel use of *aisthanesthai* in Greek as a general verb of consciousness. In the *De veritate*, 10.8, 321b225-29, for example, Aquinas cites a passage from *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9.1170a29-b1, in which Aristotle remarks that “if we perceive, we perceive that we perceive, and if we think, that we think; and to perceive that we perceive or think is to perceive that we exist. . . .” The translation is that of the revised Oxford version, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). The version of Bekker and the Oxford version of Bywater differ on this point: Bekker reads, ὥστε αἰσθανόμεθ’ ἂν ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα καὶ νοοῖμεν ὅτι νοοῦμεν. τὸ δ’ ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν, ὅτι ἐσμέν; Bywater’s emended text, which most accept, reads as follows: ὥστε ἂν αἰσθανόμεθ’, ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα κἂν νοῶμεν, ὅτι νοοῦμεν, τὸ δ’ ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν, ὅτι ἐσμέν. The Latin version cited by Aquinas in the *De veritate* reads as follows: “Sentimus autem quoniam sentimus, et intelligimus quoniam intelligimus, et quia hoc sentimus intelligimus quoniam sumus.” The Grosseteste translation, found in Aquinas’s *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, ed. R.-A Gauthier, 2 vols. (Rome: Leonine Commission, 1969), as well as in the *Aristoteles Latinus* series, is slightly different (I quote the version in Aquinas’s commentary, 538): “Sentimus autem utique quoniam sentimus et intelligimus quoniam intelligimus, hoc autem quoniam sentimus vel intelligimus quoniam sumus.”

For a discussion of this use of *aisthanesthai*, and of the *Nicomachean Ethics* text (which is beset by textual complications), see Kahn, “Sensation and Consciousness,” 23-29.

indeterminacy.<sup>18</sup>

The earlier and more detailed examination of the mode of human self-awareness found in *De veritate* 10.8 presents a somewhat different approach to the types of self-knowledge, and uses a slightly different terminology. Nonetheless, the upshot of Aquinas's arguments is the same. In this discussion, the basic division of knowledge of the soul into universal and particular is retained, although here it is expressed in terms of common (*commune*) versus proper (*proprium*) knowledge. Here again, the soul's common knowledge of itself is identified as the only mode of cognition whereby the soul apprehends its own nature. The soul's proper knowledge of itself is that which pertains to the soul "according as it has being in such and such an individual," and as in the *Summa* it is once again described in vague epistemic terms, as the knowledge whereby one "perceives that he has a soul" (*percipit se habere animam*). There is a further and useful contrast between the soul's universal and particular self-knowledge in this text that is omitted in the *Summa* discussion: the common mode of knowledge is described as knowledge of the soul's nature—its *quid est*—and of its proper accidents (*per se accidentia eius*), whereas the proper mode is merely knowledge by the soul of whether it exists—its *an est*.<sup>19</sup>

The *De veritate* also introduces a further distinction within the individual soul's mode of knowing itself, between actual and habitual knowledge. Actual self-knowledge refers to the soul's specific perception of itself through its acts—its awareness, at the time that it is exercising various activities, that it is alive, existing, and performing these vital operations. For this sort of self-knowledge, Aquinas emphasizes the need for the intellect to be actualized by some object,

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<sup>18</sup> The vagueness of Aquinas's language describing the individual soul's knowledge of itself is also noted by Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom*, 129.

<sup>19</sup> *De veritate* 10.8, 321b207-16: "Illa enim cognitio quae communiter de omnia habetur, est qua cognoscitur animae natura; cognitio vero quam quis habet de anima quantum ad id quod est sibi proprium, est cognitio de anima secundum quod habet esse in tali individuo. Unde per hanc cognitionem cognoscitur an est anima, sicut cum aliquis percipit se habere animam; per aliam vero cognitionem scitur quid est anima, et quae sunt per se accidentia eius." Cf. *SCG*, 3.46, 123b5-10: "Sic igitur, secundum intentionem Augustini, mens nostra per seipsam novit seipsam in quantum de se cognoscit *quod est*. Ex hoc enim ipso quod percipit se agere, percipit se esse; agit autem per seipsam; unde per seipsam de se cognoscit quod est."

since “to understand something is prior to understanding that one understands.”<sup>20</sup> Habitual knowledge, however, at first seems to involve a direct, non-Aristotelian mode of knowledge of the self independent of any actualization of the intellect by an object: “But as for habitual knowledge, I say this, that the soul sees itself through its essence, that is, from the fact that its essence is present to itself, it is able to enter into the act of knowing itself.”<sup>21</sup> But Aquinas’s description of this act of knowledge appears very similar to his general description of the soul’s understanding of itself as individual that occurs later in the *Summa*: the habitual/actual distinction seems to be nothing but a differentiation of this mode of self-knowledge, with habitual knowledge playing the role of an inchoate form of actual knowledge, which grounds its possibility. This is clear from Aquinas’s explanation of his use of the term “habitual” to describe this act of self-knowledge. For although this knowledge does not rest upon a habit—after all, its only condition is the soul’s presence to itself—its spontaneity resembles the effortlessness with which someone who has a habit in a particular science can with ease embark upon the use of that habit, as a grammarian, for example, can easily speak grammatically at any moment.<sup>22</sup> The soul’s habitual knowledge of itself thus seems to indicate nothing more than the fact that the soul, by its mere presence to itself, is poised and ready to apprehend that it thinks, senses, is alive, and so on. It does not need to acquire a habit in order to realize actual knowledge of its *an est*. Rather, it is as if it is already in possession of such a habit from the outset; it does not need to perceive itself repeatedly in order to acquire ease at exercising this type of knowledge.<sup>23</sup>

Despite its immediacy, then, habitual knowledge of the soul as an individual, particular thing remains devoid of content and unable of itself to provide individuals with any knowledge of their

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<sup>20</sup> *De veritate*, 10.8, 321b229-34: “Nullus autem percipit se intelligere nisi ex hoc quod aliquid intelligit: quia prius est intelligere aliquid quam intelligere se intelligere; et ideo pervenit anima ad actualiter percipiendum se esse, per illud quod intelligit, vel sentit.”

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.8, 321b234-238: “Sed quantum ad habitualement cognitionem sic dico quod anima per essentiam suam se videt, id est, ex hoc ipso quod essentia sua est sibi praesens, est potens exire in actum cognitionis sui ipsius . . . .”

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.8, 321b238-322a246. The example of grammar is used in a parallel passage in “The Soul’s Knowledge of Itself,” ed. Kennedy, 38.125-27.

<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this type of knowledge, see Lambert, “Habitual Knowledge,” *passim*.

own natures. The soul knows itself quidditatively and essentially—the only way that is relevant for the dispute with Averroes—in just the same way that it knows other objects, namely, by abstracting from images, forming concepts and judgments, and acquiring intelligible species.<sup>24</sup> So long as someone like Averroes is able to explain how individuals can be aware in some sense of the activities going on in and through them, he would seem to be able, even on Thomistic grounds, to account for the perception by the individual that “this human being understands.”

Aquinas’s explicit references to self-knowledge in *Summa theologiae* 1.76.1, and his implicit evocation of that experience in all of the other appeals to *hic homo intelligit*, thus seem to conform to the general position on consciousness and self-knowledge found in the questions dedicated to this problem. But there remains a difficulty here for our linking of these texts to the Averroist controversies, since there are also a number of other passages in the anti-Averroist polemic where Aquinas alludes to the soul’s self-knowledge, in the context of arguing that Averroes overlooks the fact that matter, not individuality alone, is what impedes the intelligibility of the particular. In these texts, Aquinas switches to using the more specific phrase, *intelligit se intelligere*, suggesting a more properly intellectual form of self-knowledge is relevant here. In the *De unitate intellectus*, for example, Aquinas refers to the intellect’s knowledge of itself as evidence that the singular as such can be known by the intellect: “Whence also my intellect, when it understands itself to understand, understands a certain singular act; but when it understands ‘to understand’ absolutely, it understands something universal. For singularity is not opposed to intelligibility, but materiality is; whence, since there are some immaterial singular things, as was said above concerning separate substances, nothing prevents singulars of this kind from being understood.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Most of Aquinas’s arguments in support of the Aristotelian conception of self-knowledge emphasize the parity between the intellect’s apprehension of its objects and its properly intellectual apprehension of itself, focusing on the role of the phantasm or image in the normal human processes of intellection. See, for example, “The Soul’s Knowledge of Itself,” ed. Kennedy, 37.79-38.100; and *De veritate*, 10.8, 322a247-b95, which casts this point in terms of the distinction between apprehension and judgment; cf. also *De veritate*, 10.8 ad 1m, 322b319-323b334.

<sup>25</sup> *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 5, 312b235-42 (§112, Zedler trans., 70).

At first, texts such as this would seem to imply that there is some sense in which the intellect's knowledge of itself, even as a singular individual, is a true act of intellectual cognition, and hence involves some sort of grasp of the nature of the intellect as such. If this is so, then Aquinas is clearly in conflict with his position in discussions dedicated to the problem of self-knowledge. However, a closer consideration of this argument makes it clear that it offers no supplemental account of a type of intellectual self-knowledge that is both immediate and quidditative, and thus it is unable to challenge Averroes's ability to account for the phenomenon of individual intellectual consciousness. For the argument presented here is only concerned to show the *possibility* of an intellectual act pertaining to the singular: it is not directly concerned to say anything about how that act is effected in human beings, or what its content is. Moreover, it is clear that arguments such as this already *presuppose* that the human intellect is an individual, spiritual substance, to the extent that here Aquinas groups the individual human knower together with the separate substances, as examples of particulars not individuated by matter alone. They are parallel in this way to the text in *Summa theologiae* 1.76.1, when Aquinas refers to the individual perceiving that he has an *intellective* soul: the claim is not that the perception is, in terms of its content, a perception of an intellectual soul, but rather, that the soul which the individual perceives as his own is, as we know from Thomistic psychology, an intellective soul.<sup>26</sup> But remarks such as these do not nullify Aquinas's professed claim that the intellect never knows its own essence as such directly, nor do they nullify his position in other texts that the human intellect only knows the singular as singular by means of reflection on phantasms.<sup>27</sup> Even

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<sup>26</sup> See above at n. 18. The point here is that I may, at a given time, perceive that p exists, without knowing anything else about p. At a later time, I might discover that p is an X. I may then say loosely that I perceive an X when I am perceiving p, but this does not entail that the prior perception of p was a perception of p as an X.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, *ST* 1.86.1: "Indirecte autem, et quasi per quamdam reflexionem, potest cognoscere singulare: quia, sicut supra dictum est, etiam postquam species intelligibiles abstraxerit, non potest secundum eas actu intelligere nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata, in quibus species intelligibiles intelligit, ut dicitur in III *de Anima*. Sic igitur ipsum universale per speciem intelligibilem directe intelligit; indirecte autem singularia, quorum sunt phantasmata." In the reply ad 3m of this text, a reply which takes up an objection based on self-intellection, Aquinas raises the distinction between singularity and materiality as impediments to intellection. This shows that he

if the individual human intellect is a spiritual creature, and as such intelligible *per se*, it is not fully intelligible *to itself* in this way.<sup>28</sup>

Aquinas's discussions of the soul's self-knowledge, both within his critique of Averroes and independently of it, leave one with the impression that, while Aquinas is adamant that the soul's self-knowledge is not immediate, he is without an *ex professo* position concerning the exact faculty by which consciousness in general, and consciousness of the individual's intellectual activities in particular, are realized. The tendency to prefer terms denoting perceptual experience in general to verbs denoting intellection, when combined with the focus on the unity of apperception in the critique of Platonic intellectualism, suggests that Aquinas has some misgivings about assigning such immediate acts of consciousness directly or principally to the intellect itself. And to the extent that he holds that the intellect itself is the perceiving agent in such cases, it remains true that the intellect's immediate awareness of itself is not an act which involves an essential, universal insight into its own nature, and thus, it is not properly an act of intellection in any standard Thomistic or Aristotelian sense of the term. If it does involve the intellect, it will, like all other acts of human cognition, require the cooperation of sense faculties as well.

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distinguishes the claim about intelligibility *per se* from claims about the mode and content of what is understood by us in this life.

<sup>28</sup> Compare this parallel text from *SCG* 2.75, 475a47-b2, in which Aquinas purposely reverts to *percipere* to describe the soul's particular self-knowledge: "[N]on tamen removetur quin per reflexionem quandam intellectus seipsum intelligat, et suum intelligere, et speciem qua intelligit. Suum autem intelligere intelligit dupliciter: uno modo in particulari, intelligit enim se nunc intelligere; alio modo in universali, secundum quod ratiocinatur de ipsius actus natura. Unde et intellectum et speciem intelligibilem intelligit eodem modo dupliciter: et percipiendo se esse et habere speciem intelligibilem, quod est cognoscere in particulari; et considerando suam et speciei intelligibilis naturam, quod est cognoscere in universali. Et secundum hoc de intellectu et de intelligibili tractatur in scientiis." This succinct recapitulation of Aquinas's views on self-knowledge is presented in the course of one of Aquinas's critiques of unicity. However, Aquinas does not allude to self-knowledge here for the sake of arguing that Averroes's view cannot account for consciousness of intellection. Rather, the allusion to the basic Aristotelian approach to self-knowledge is merely a part of a larger series of arguments whose purpose is to show that there is a distinction between what the intellect knows, its object, and the instrument whereby it knows: "Secunda vero ratio ipsius deficit ex hoc quod non distinguit inter id quo intelligitur et id quod intelligitur" (*SCG* 2.75, 474a40-42). The allusion to self-knowledge by reflection is simply introduced here by way of clarification: although the instrument and object known are distinct in a standard act of knowing an object other than the intellect itself, this does not prevent the intellect from knowing its instrument reflectively.



That Aquinas should put limitations of this sort on the mode of the intellect's self-awareness should not surprise us, given his general allegiance to the Aristotelian principle that the human intellect, as embodied and subject to potency, only knows itself through reflection, and given the purposely vague way in which Aquinas assents to the Augustinian notion of the soul's self-awareness through its intimate presence to itself. To attribute any direct, essential self-knowledge to the intellect would, on Aristotelian principles, be tantamount to declaring the human intellect a separate substance, and hence it would entail precisely those difficulties attributed to Plato's position in the *Summa*'s discussion of the intellect's relation to the body. Yet Aquinas seems unaware that his allegiance to Aristotle on the nature of intellectual self-awareness renders inconclusive his appeal to the personal *experience* of intellectual consciousness—*hic homo singularis intelligit*—as a critique of Averroes's conception of human nature. For if the human soul's knowledge of itself, and of all of its activities, is secondary and indirect, there is no way that an appeal to the personal experience of consciousness alone can provide a determinate insight into the nature that renders such acts of self-awareness possible. And the door thus remains open for Averroes to claim that the experience of intellectual consciousness which we have as individuals can be personal to each of us, even if the intellect that ultimately grounds that experience is a single one, shared by all conscious human knowers.

**3. The Objectification of the Individual:** If the direct appeal to the intellect's experience of itself found in many of Aquinas's attacks on Averroes is inconclusive, Aquinas is not without more specific arguments showing that the Averroist position on the relationship between the intellect and the individual robs the individual of the foundations by which intellectual consciousness, even if mediated and indirect, is to be explained. One of Aquinas's favorite criticisms of Averroes's doctrine of the double subject implies just such a critique, although Aquinas does not generally phrase the objection explicitly in terms of individual consciousness.

In order to understand Aquinas's critique in this regard, as well as the defense of Averroes

which I will provide in the following section, it is necessary to understand the general tenor of Averroes's claim that actual intelligibles (*intellecta in actu*), like the objects of all the other perceptual faculties of the soul, have two subjects (*perficitur per duo subiecta*), and that it is sufficient for these intelligibles to be united to the individual through one of their subjects alone in order for the individual human knower to be "thinking in actuality" (*intelligens in actu*).<sup>29</sup> On the level of intellection, this doctrine of the double subject is essentially an elaboration on the Aristotelian claim that the activities of the intellect are always dependent upon the concomitant activities of the imagination. But Averroes argues that in every form of apprehension, from sensation through to intellection, a similar dependence occurs: every act of apprehension is the product of two subjects, a subject of *existence*, and a subject of *truth*.<sup>30</sup> The subject of existence is the recipient cognitive power in which the new, more abstract version of the apprehended form created by each process of cognition comes to exist; using Aristotelian terminology, Averroes calls it the "first perfection" or "actuality" of the percipient (*prima perfectio sentientis*).<sup>31</sup> In the case of sensation, the subject of existence will be the sentient organ which is actualized by the reception of a sensible form; similarly, the imaginative faculty, as recipient of an image which persists after the absence of the external sensible object, will function as the subject of existence in an act of imagination.<sup>32</sup> And by the same token, in intellectual knowledge the subject of

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<sup>29</sup> The discussion that follows is based upon Averroes's *Long commentary*, Bk. 3, comm. 5, 399.370-401.423; 404.501-405.527. For other discussions of the double subject, see B. C. Bazán, "Intellectum Speculativum: Averroes, Thomas Aquinas, and Siger of Brabant on the Intelligible Object," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19 (1981): 425-46, esp. 427-31, and 431-39 (on Aquinas's critique of the doctrine); Davidson, "Averroes on the Material Intellect," 117-20; and especially Michael Blaustein, *Averroes on the Imagination and the Intellect* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984), 58-67; 174-77. Blaustein's analysis is especially important, since it shows clearly that the theory of the double subject is a feature of Averroes's general theory of apprehension, rather than an innovation introduced to solve the problems created by the doctrine of unicity.

<sup>30</sup> The Latin for these phrases is *subiectum per quod sunt vera* and *illud per quod . . . est forma existens* or *per quod intellecta sunt unum entium in mundo* (*Long commentary*, Bk. 3, comm. 5, 400.382-90).

<sup>31</sup> *Perfectio* in the Latin Averroes reflects the Arabic *istikmāl*, which in turn renders Aristotle's *entelecheia*.

<sup>32</sup> In the *Long commentary*, Averroes skips directly from sensation to intellectual conceptualization, although he clearly implies that the structure of the double subject pertains to all cognitive acts. Moreover, the earlier antecedents of the doctrine of the double subject in the *Epitome of the "De anima"* and the *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction*, trans. K. P. Bland (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1982), explicitly

existence will be the material intellect itself, insofar as it is recipient of the intelligibles produced by the agent intellect “drawing the [imagined] intentions from potency into act” (*extrahens has intentiones de potentia in actum*).<sup>33</sup>

The subject of truth for any apprehended object is the thing by which that object is measured and to which it refers. This subject gives the act of cognition its content, and for this reason it determines the truth of what is apprehended, since it provides the perceived object, directly or mediately,<sup>34</sup> with its reference to the external world.<sup>35</sup> In the case of an act of vision, for example, the quality of color in the extramental thing seen (*sensatum extra animam*) provides the subject of truth for the sensible form, whereas the sense of sight (*visus*), in which the intention of color comes to exist after having been actualized by the presence of light, constitutes its subject of existence.<sup>36</sup> According to Averroes, the same relations hold on the level of intellection: the subject of truth for any intelligible is the generable and corruptible image (*intentio ymaginata*) possessed by the individual, which links the intellect’s act to the external, sensible world. It differs from the sensible subject of truth only insofar as it is found within the soul itself (*intra animam*) rather than in outside it (*extra animam*). The subject of existence for the intelligible is the material intellect itself, into which the intelligible produced by the activity of the agent intellect (or the sum total of such intelligibles, which Averroes calls the speculative intellect) is received. Averroes’s contention, then, is that the phenomenon of individual thought, which is

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incorporate imagination and the other internal senses. On this point see Blaustein, *Averroes on Imagination and Intellect*, 63.

<sup>33</sup> *Intentio* is the Latin translation of *ma‘nā*, an Arabic term which literally means “idea” or “meaning.” As it is used in this context, it refers to the mode of being that a form has insofar as it is perceived or apprehended, and it can be applied to any level of cognition, from sensation to intellection.

<sup>34</sup> The qualification “mediately” is necessary because of Averroes’s explicit claim that the subject of truth in intellection is within the soul, i.e., the images within the imaginative faculty. Presumably the same would hold for the subject of truth of images, namely, the impressions of the sensibles that remain in the common sense.

<sup>35</sup> For this reason, we might simply call it the object known. Thus Hyman translates *subiectum*, when used for the subject of truth, as “object” (328). However, this oversimplifies Averroes’s view, and it is misleading insofar as the subject of truth is a subject *for* the object as perceived or known, i.e. for the intelligibles (*intellecta*) themselves.

<sup>36</sup> Averroes refers to both the extramental quality and the perceived intention as *color*. When he wishes to be more precise, the quality is called *color in potentia*, the intention *color in actu*.

subject to generation and corruption, can be explained to the extent that one of the two subjects of the intelligible object, the image, belongs to the individual, even though its other subject, the material intellect, is an eternal, separate substance that is not likewise individuated.

Aquinas's objection to the doctrine of the double subject calls into question Averroes's contention that the conjunction of intelligibles to individuals through images or phantasms offers a sufficient explanation of why we attribute the act of intellection itself to such individuals. The argument in *Summa theologiae* 1.76.1, which we considered above, picks up the views of Averroes on precisely this point: "But this sort of conjunction or union is not sufficient [to account for] the fact that this action of the intellect is the action of Socrates."<sup>37</sup> Aquinas's development of this critique is especially compelling because it is based upon an appeal to an Aristotelian text of which Averroes is especially fond: Aristotle's assertion, at *De anima* 3.7.431a14-15, that images (*phantasmata*) are like sensible objects (*ta aisthēmata*) for the thinking soul (*tē de dianoētikē*). In Aquinas's view, even if one were to accept that this text supports the position that the intellect can in some sense be said to have images as its *objects*, and hence be conjoined through them to the individual (a position that Aquinas himself rejects), the fact remains that these images, as the analogues of the sensibles, are objects understood, *intellecta*, not a knowing subject, *intelligens*. The point is expressed in this way in the *De unitate intellectus*: "For it is clear that through the intelligible species something is understood, whereas through the intellective power one understands something; just as also through the sensible species something is sensed, but through the sensitive power one senses something."<sup>38</sup> Aquinas's point is quite straightforward: so long as the intellective power itself, the material intellect, is placed outside the individual, then no matter how important the individual's images may be for the act of understanding, that individual can in no wise claim personal status as a

<sup>37</sup> *ST* 1.76.1. In the *De unitate intellectus*, the same objection is framed explicitly in terms of the maxim, *hic homo intelligit*: "[N]ec adhuc talis copulatio sufficeret ad hoc, quod hic homo intelligeret" (chap. 3, 303b99-100 [§66]).

<sup>38</sup> *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 3, 303b101-105 (§66).

knower.

Aquinas drives this issue home most forcefully by offering a concrete example of the Aristotelian comparison of the sensible to the image: that of the participation of a colored object, such as a wall, in the act of vision for which it provides the sensible species, say, the color white:

But it is clear that the activity of vision is not attributed to a wall from the fact that the colors, whose similitudes are in vision, are on the wall. For we do not say that the wall sees, but rather, that it is seen. Therefore, from the fact that the species of the phantasms are in the possible intellect, it does not follow that Socrates, in whom the phantasms are, understands, but that he, or his phantasms, are understood.<sup>39</sup>

This comparison of the individual's images to the colors on a wall is a striking one. It implies that under the Averroist scheme, we as individuals do little more than provide the raw material of thought to be mined by the separate material intellect. We are not active participants in the exercise of thinking, but passive objects or instruments. The choice of the wall as example seems especially devastating—as something inert, unintelligent, and by implication, lacking in any awareness of the activity to whose exercise it is contributing, it seems to reinforce Aquinas's basic objection that Averroes has ignored the central truth of *hic homo intelligit*.

### III. A Response on Behalf of Averroes

**1. The Dependence of Intellect on Imagination:** What are we to make of this apparently irrefutable criticism? Is the Commentator indeed hoist by his own petard?<sup>40</sup> As I noted earlier,

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<sup>39</sup> *ST* 1.76.1. The wall-analogy is repeated by Aquinas in the *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 3, 303b97-304a118 (§66); the *Quaestiones de anima*, q. 2, 70; *CT* 1.85, 109b91-100; and *In 3 De anima*, chap. 1, 206b339-52 (lect. 7, n. 694). The more general objection that Averroes has made us objects rather than subjects of intellectual thought is raised in *SCG* 2.59, 415b3-20; and in *In 2 Sententiarum*, dist. 17, q. 2, a. 1 (2:427): “Tertio, quia operatio non egreditur ab objecto, sed a potentia: non enim visibile videt, sed visus.” Other analogies are sometimes employed by Aquinas, as in *SCG* 2.59, 415b21-40, and *CT* 1.85, 109b81-90, where a stone substitutes for the wall; and in the argument immediately preceding the wall-analogy in the *De unitate intellectus*, where Aquinas argues that the fact that a person's image is reflected in a mirror does not allow us to attribute to that person the act of reflection (chap. 3, 303b76-96, [§65]).

<sup>40</sup> In his article, “*Intellectum speculativum*,” Bazán argues that while some of Aquinas's objections to Averroes are based upon epistemological principles that Averroes does not share with Aquinas, this objection is epistemologically

Averroes is fond of citing the very passage from *De anima* 3.7 on which Aquinas bases his argument.<sup>41</sup> The passage is, in fact, one of the ways in which Averroes supports his repudiation of Ibn Bājjah's (Avempace's) identification of the material intellect as a disposition inherent in the imagination or its intentional contents, a position Averroes himself once upheld.<sup>42</sup>

Commenting on the relevant passage in his *Long Commentary*, Averroes remarks, "And [Aristotle] also expressly says that the relation of the intelligibles to the images is like the relation of color to the colored body, not like the relation of color to the sense of sight, as Ibn Bājjah supposed."<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Averroes recognizes that his own mature position, that the intelligible is conjoined to the individual through images, requires him to hold that when the term "perfection" is applied to the disposition within the soul which is perfected in intellectual cognition, it is predicated of it equivocally in comparison to its predication of the dispositions which underlie all the other cognitive faculties of the soul. For in the case of intellectual cognition, it is the *mover*, not the *recipient*, of the perfection in which the disposition within the

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neutral, and indeed, based upon Averroes's own emphasis in the *Long Commentary*, with the result that "the Arab Master is defeated on the ground that he himself had chosen . . ." (435).

<sup>41</sup> In the *Summa contra gentiles*, 2.59, 415a44-47, Aquinas also notes this: "Species autem intellecta comparatur ad phantasmata sicut species visibilis in actu ad coloratum quod est extra animam: et hac similitudine ipse utitur, et etiam Aristoteles."

<sup>42</sup> Averroes holds this view in the original version of his *Epitome of the "De anima,"* 86.5-15. For discussion of the different versions of this commentary, and of Averroes's relation to Ibn Bājjah, see Davidson, "Averroes on the Material Intellect," 94, 97-105; Blaustein, *Averroes on Imagination and Intellect*, 162-73.

The principal source for Ibn Bājjah's views on the nature of the intellect is his *Ittiṣāl al-ʿaql bi-al-insān* (The Conjunction of the Intellect with Humans), ed. Majid Fakhry, in *Rasāʾil Ibn Bājjah al-Ilāhīyah* (Ibn Bājjah's Metaphysical Treatises), 154-73 (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1968). An earlier edition with Spanish translation was published by Miguel Asṣn Palencios in *Al-Andalus* 7 (1942): 1-47; there is a recent French translation by Vincent Lagardère, "L'épître d'Ibn Bājjah sur la conjonction de l'intellect avec l'esprit humain," *Revue des études islamiques* 49 (1981): 175-96. The chapter "On the Rational Soul" in Ibn Bājjah's own *Kitāb al-naḥs* or *De anima* is brief and incomplete. See the edition of M. S. Al-Maṣṣūmī (Damascus, 1960), 145-49.

<sup>43</sup> *Long Commentary*, Bk. 3, comm. 30, 469.27-31. Cf. Bk. 3, comm. 5, 398.334-38: "Intentiones enim ymagine sunt moventes intellectum, non mote. Declaratur enim quod sunt illud cuius proportio ad virtutem distinctivam rationabilem est sicut proportio sensati ad sentiens, non sicut sentientis ad habitum qui est sensus." The *Middle Commentary* passes over this text in silence; however, the appendix added to the Madrid manuscript of the *Epitome of the "De anima,"* in which Averroes repudiates the original position he held, refers explicitly to 3.7 as evidence that the position of Ibn Bājjah is un-Aristotelian: "As for the imaginative forms, they are those whose relations to the material intellect are the [same as the] relation of the sensible to sensation, that is, of the visible to sight, and not [the same as] the relation of the eye to vision, that is, of the subject, as was previously the case in what we said in what we had written. And the only previous person who said this was Abū Bakr al-Sāʿīgh, and he misled us" (90.8-11).

individual human knower has its seat:

[T]he disposition (*preparatio* = *al-isti`dād*) which is in the imaginative power for the intelligibles is similar to the dispositions which are in the other powers of the soul . . . to the extent that both [types of] disposition are generated through the generation of the individual, and corrupted through its corruption, and generally are numbered through its enumeration. But they differ in this, that this disposition which is in the imagined intentions is a disposition in the mover *qua* mover; but the other, that is, the disposition which is in the first perfection of the other parts of the soul, is a disposition in the recipient.<sup>44</sup>

In this passage, then, Averroes himself is highlighting the fact that on his view the individuated aspect of human intellection is not the aspect that is the *recipient* of intelligibles—that which cognitively *becomes all things*, as Aristotle would put it<sup>45</sup>—but rather, the aspect which acts as a partial mover of the intellect, the imaginative forms. Or, to use Averroes’s own terminology, in intellection it is the subject of truth, *not* the subject of existence, which resides in the individual knower. Moreover, Averroes openly acknowledges that this is an anomaly: all the other perceptual or apprehending activities of the soul are such that the cognitive powers which permit their performance are attributed to the individual, not through their subjects of truth, but rather, through their subjects of existence.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the very notion of a subject of truth in Averroes’s epistemology seems to coincide with the notion of the object understood, or at least the thing denoted or signified by one’s knowledge. To use the parallel with vision that Averroes and Aquinas both employ, the disposition for sight exists in the eye, not in the colored body, and the eye’s seeing power is perfected when it receives the form of the colored object. But according to

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<sup>44</sup> *Long Commentary*, 405.537-39; 405.540-406.548.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *De anima* 3.5, 430a14-15.

<sup>46</sup> Aristotle too emphasizes that the act of perception or cognition has its locus in the patient or the thing affected, rather than in the mover. See for example *De anima* 3.2, 426a2-14.

the passage I have just cited, the disposition for intellection is located in the imaginative forms, which, by Averroes's own admission, do not receive, or become cognitively perfected by, the intelligible form, but rather, are its partial moving cause.<sup>47</sup> The Aristotelian definition of cognition, as the *reception* of form without matter, does not seem to be applicable to Averroes's description of the imagination's role in thought.<sup>48</sup> By focusing our attention on this consequence of his position, Averroes comes dangerously close to exulting in the very peculiarities that leave his position open to Aquinas's criticism that the individual can in no way be described, on Averroist grounds, as a knowing recipient of intelligibles.

However, in order for this critique to be completely successful, Averroes would have to hold that the relationship between sensation and the sensibly-perceptible qualities of things outside the soul is *in every respect* identical to the relationship between intellection and the images within the soul of the individual, by which that individual is conjoined to the material intellect. And it is here that Aquinas's clever use of the wall-analogy breaks down: for the wall, in which the color that is the object of sensation inheres, is, as we noted earlier, nothing but an inanimate, inert, unconscious thing. But the human imagination, in which the intentions understood by the intellect inhere, is a cognitive and conscious faculty in its own right. When its contents are perfected and transformed by its union with the material intellect, it may be claimed that, unlike the wall, it has an inherent capacity to apprehend in some fashion what is occurring within it.

Still, for the imagination to be conscious of the thinking that depends upon it, the contents of the imagination will have to be so closely linked to the contents of the intellect that the awareness of the image will necessarily entail the awareness of its intellectual counterpart, and

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<sup>47</sup> This is, of course, the precise point on which Averroes repudiated his earlier agreement with Alexander and Ibn Bājjah. He argues that if the material intellect were the imagination, or one of its dispositions, this would entail the absurdity of something receiving itself: imagination would be both a mover of the intellect, and the recipient of its own moving activities. See *Long Commentary*, Bk. 3, comm. 5, 398.331-340, 400.395-399. One of the later interpolations into the *Epitome of the "De anima"* makes this same point: "But there follows from this that something would receive itself, since the imaginative intentions are themselves the intelligible intentions. And for this reason, it is clear that it is necessary that the intellect which is in potency be something else" (86.15-17).

<sup>48</sup> *De anima* 2.12.424a19-20; 3.4.429a15-17; 3.8.431b26-432a4.



vice versa. Averroes provides some compelling evidence that he upholds just such a position on the relations between intelligibles and their images in an early analysis of the realist foundations of Aristotle's theory of knowledge found in the *Epitome of the "De anima."* The passage in question develops from a consideration of the consequences of Aristotle's rejection of subsistent Platonic forms, a rejection that entails that the intelligibles known by us "only have existence insofar as they are dependent upon their subjects external to the soul." Moreover, the intellect's access to its extramental subjects in turn "relies in its entirety upon the imaginative form"—if that form is veridical, its corresponding intelligible will be veridical, and if false, its corresponding intelligible form will be false.<sup>49</sup> Most interesting, however, is Averroes's subsequent assessment of the significance of the intellect's truth-functional dependence on the imagination for the intelligible form itself: given that universals depend for their existence on particulars and their images, the intelligible and its image can be viewed as correlatives, and their interdependence subject to the laws governing the logic of relations:

And in general it is clear in a primary way that between universals and the images of their particular individuals there is some relation by which the universals come to be existent, since the universal has existence as a universal only through that which is a particular, just as the father is a father only insofar as he has a son. And it happens that the names of both [correlates], as a consequence of their being correlates, signify both of them insofar as they are correlates. And one of the things proper to correlates, as is said in another place, is that they exist in potency and in actuality simultaneously, and that whenever one of them exists, the other exists, and whenever one of them is destroyed, the other is destroyed.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Epitome of the "De anima,"* 80.10-18.

<sup>50</sup> *Epitome of the "De anima,"* 80.18-81.4. For Averroes's discussion of the logic of relations, see, for example, the *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-maq'ālāt* (Middle Commentary on the *Categories*), ed. M. M. Kassem, C. E. Butterworth, and A. A. Haridi (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1980), chap. 6, §58, 114.15-116.7; English translation by C. E. Butterworth, *Averroes' Middle Commentaries on Aristotle's "Categories" and "De Interpretatione"* (Princeton:

Having thus reminded his audience of the basic properties of relations, Averroes proceeds to draw a rather remarkable conclusion regarding the individuation of intelligibles. For to the extent that an intelligible is essentially a correlate of the corresponding images from which it has been abstracted, it follows that such an intelligible must be defined by its relation to those images. That is, since the content of any item of knowledge is determined by its denotation of actual existents, every distinct act of intellection bears the peculiar stamp of the images which the imagination related to it has encountered:

And through the dependence of these universals upon the images of their individuals, they come to be multiplied through the latter's multiplication. For the intelligible of "human being" for me is, for example, not its intelligible for Aristotle, for its intelligible in me only depends upon individual images that are other than the individuals whose images its intelligible depends upon in Aristotle.<sup>51</sup>

On Averroes's view, then, the entire content and specification of all acts of intellection is provided by the images which are the correlates of the intelligibles, from which those intelligibles were first drawn, and which accompany any subsequent exercise of their thought by a particular individual.<sup>52</sup> The intellect only provides the capacity to recognize the universality inherent in the particular images. This view is clearly an elaboration upon, and development of, a central Aristotelian tenet—namely, that the soul never thinks without an image, both in the sense that it cannot acquire concepts without abstracting them from images, and that it cannot exercise

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Princeton University Press, 1983), 56-58; and the *Tafsīr mā ba'd al-ʿabīʿah* (Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*), ed. M. Bouyges, Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum, Séries Arabe 6, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1967), Bk. 5, comm. 20, 2:608.5-621.6. It is unlikely, however, that either of these texts is meant by Averroes when he refers to "another place," since both are generally acknowledged to be later than the *Epitome of the "De anima."* It is more probable that Averroes has in mind the Aristotelian *Categories* and *Metaphysics* themselves.

<sup>51</sup> *Epitome of the "De anima,"* 81.10-14. Cf. the *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction*, §11, 68-69, where the same point is linked to the notion of complete and incomplete inductions. The best discussion of the construal of the intelligible and the image as correlates is that of Blaustein, *Averroes on Imagination and Intellect*, 164-65.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Blaustein, *Averroes on Imagination and Intellect*, 165: "It seems, therefore, that the relation which any intelligible bears to its associated images enters into the very constitution of that intelligible, according to Averroes."

the thought of any concept that it has already acquired without the accompaniment of a particular image.<sup>53</sup> And it would seem to follow from such a view of the relationship between the intelligible and the images that all consciousness of thinking will of necessity involve a simultaneous imaginative awareness, on the part of the bearer of the particular images to which any given universal refers, of the act of thinking in which that individual plays so central a role.<sup>54</sup>

Although this passage comes from an early text of Averroes, in which he upholds the view, inspired by Alexander of Aphrodisias, that the intellect is itself a disposition in the imagination, the doctrine that the image is a correlate to the intelligible, and is thereby responsible for the individuation and multiplication of the intelligible itself, is nothing but an inchoate form of the doctrine of the image as the intelligible's subject of truth found in the *Long Commentary*.<sup>55</sup> So the claim that the intelligible is individuated by its participation in a series of numerically distinct relations with the images of individual human beings will hold even after Averroes has determined, on other grounds, that the material intellect itself is separate and one for all people. On Averroes's construal of the intelligible and the images as correlated entities, each intelligible in the material intellect will be related to the myriad images of various individuals, and those images in turn will be related to the intelligible dependent on them. In Averroes's later works, this theme is expressed by different motifs: in the *Long Commentary*, Averroes insists that the

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<sup>53</sup> See *De anima*, 3.7.432a16-17; 432b2; 3.8.432a3-10; *De memoria*, 1.449b3-450a1.

<sup>54</sup> It is in fact the Aristotelian passages that inspired this striking notion of the image as a correlate of the intelligible that Modrak alludes to in order to support her views on Aristotle's theory of consciousness. See n. 8 above.

<sup>55</sup> On this point, cf. Blaustein, *Averroes on Imagination and Intellect*, 204-210. Although Bazán does not use the *Epitome of the "De anima"* in his article, he also seems to recognize that the doctrine of the double subject entails a position like that explicitly outlined in the earlier work: "In its turn, according to Averroes, analysis of the known object, of the *intellectum speculativum*, makes it possible to see that its entire truth content (its relation with the real) is provided by images, but, simultaneously, that it could not be *intellectum* (known) without being actually considered by the material intellect ("*Intellectum Speculativum*," 427-28). One must be careful, however, in claiming that the material intellect "considers" the intelligible, if that phrase is meant to suggest that the consideration takes place independently of the individual, in the way that my consideration of "human being" is independent of yours. The earlier passage suggests that the relationship between the intellect and the imagination in the actual exercise of thought is far more symbiotic than Bazán's description would allow: the material intellect conjoins with the individual in such a way that the consideration belongs properly to both; that conjunction yields numerically distinct intelligibles for each individual because it depends upon a set of individual, numerically distinct relations. This is considered in more detail in what follows.

intelligible that results from the perfection of the material intellect by images constitutes a single hylemorphic *congregatum* that is not “some third thing” apart from its individual components.<sup>56</sup> In the *Middle Commentary*, the material intellect is at one point identified, not simply as the separate substance that serves as the subject of intellection, but as “something composed from the disposition existent in us and from the intellect conjoined to this disposition,” presumably the disposition in our imaginations.<sup>57</sup> The insight expressed in all three works is the same: so integral is the imagination to understanding that no aspect of intellection, including its conscious exercise, can be severed from the cognitive processes proper to imagination itself—including the imagination’s own ability to be aware of its proper activity of summoning images for consideration by the intellect. While Averroes may claim to have been misled by this insight early in his career into identifying the intellect as nothing but a function of the imagination, the insight itself remains constant throughout his entire psychological corpus, and the imagination

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<sup>56</sup> *Long Commentary*, 404.503-512: “Et est etiam manifestum quod materia et forma copulantur adinvicem ita quod congregatum ex eis sit unicum, et maxime intellectus materialis et intentio intellecta in actu; quod enim componitur ex eis non est aliquod tertium aliud ab eis sicut est de aliis compositis ex materia et forma. Continuatio igitur intellecti cum homine impossibile est ut sit nisi per continuationem alterius istarum duarum partium cum eo, scilicet partis que est de eo quasi materia, et partis que est de ipso quasi forma.”

<sup>57</sup> *Middle Commentary*, 124.10-11 of Ivry’s Arabic text (on 429a10-29); Ivry trans., 21-22. This comment occurs in that section of the *Middle Commentary* which contains Averroes’s claim that the material and agent intellects are respectively the outward looking and self-thinking aspects of a single separate substance, which constitutes our final form and perfection. The exact place of this doctrine in the development of Averroes’s thought is difficult to determine, and the subject of some controversy. Blaustein considers this Averroes’s most mature position (*Averroes on Imagination and Intellect*, x), arguing that “[t]he identity of the active and material intellects is certainly one of the most fundamental aspects of Averroes’s theory of the intellect” (175; see 174-77 for further discussion of the doctrine). Ivry, in the introduction to his forthcoming edition of the *Middle Commentary*, and in a paper presented at the 25th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, May 12, 1990, also accepts that this is Averroes’s mature teaching, and argues that the *Middle Commentary* was composed after the *Long Commentary*, to which it refers. Davidson, “Averroes on the Material Intellect,” believes that the *Middle Commentary* was composed between the *Epitome* and *Long Commentaries*, but that the references to the *Long Commentary*, and the passage on the identity of the agent and material intellects, are later interpolations (122-24). But Davidson nonetheless believes that the identity doctrine is an early compromise, superseded by the position of the *Long Commentary* (124). I tend to favor the suggestions of Blaustein and Ivry that the identity doctrine represents Averroes’s final position, although whether it was interpolated into the *Middle Commentary*, or present in its original form, seems impossible to determine from the evidence presently available. One reason for accepting the lateness of the identity doctrine is that the *Long Commentary on the “Metaphysics,”* which is generally conceded to be one of Averroes’s latest works, also alludes to the principle that the agent and material intellects are identical. See Bouyges’s edition, Bk. *Lām*, comm. 17, 1489.7-1490.10; English translation by Charles Généquand, *Ibn Rushd’s Metaphysics* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 104-5.

continues to play a central role as the locus for the individual's dynamic participation in the act of intellection of a separate material intellect.

**2. The Intellect's Dependence on Images in Aquinas:** In the preceding section, I argued that Averroes's construal of the Aristotelian dictum that the soul never thinks without an image creates a symbiosis between intellect and imagination that is so close as to entail that every act of intellection dependent upon the images of a particular individual will be accompanied by an awareness on the part of the imaginative faculty of that individual. Even though the intellect that enables the individual to participate in the act of intellectual understanding is impersonal and separate, the phenomenon of consciousness of that act of thinking can be saved in virtue of this concomitant imaginative awareness. For example, whenever I (or more precisely, the material intellect acting in and through me) entertain the universal concept "human being," I must simultaneously imagine some representative particular human being, such as Socrates. While the universality of my concept of human being derives from the separate material intellect conjoined to my images and to those of all other human beings, my own awareness of the thought is a function of my possession of this particular, determinate image, which I use to represent an instance of the universal. Moreover, this will entail that the locus of actuality of the concrete thought of "human being" occurring at this particular time, and as exemplified in this particular instance of humanity, is my image or phantasm.<sup>58</sup> as Averroes's analysis of images and intelligibles as correlates suggests, each concrete act of thinking *just is* the product of the relation between the material intellect and the images of the individual, who will be conscious of that act by simply being conscious of the images in which the thought is being exercised.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This might seem to violate the Aristotelian dictum that the locus of actuality of any process of change or alteration is the patient, not the mover (see n. 46 above). But this would be true only if the image were being viewed in its role as the initial source or mover of the intellect. When the image acts as a vehicle for the subsequent exercise of thought, it is no longer a mover, but a constituent element of the activity of thinking itself: the intellectual faculty (*to noētikon*) thinks the forms *in* the images (*en tois phantasmasi*) (3.7.431b1).

<sup>59</sup> Compare Modrak's description of this link, as applied to Aristotle: "In thinking about a universal, the mind apprehends at least one *phantasma*. The *phantasma* is able to play a role in thinking, because the particular that is grasped by perception and preserved in the *phantasma* is implicitly universal. . . . By using the *phantasma* to

I have also argued, however, that Averroes's ability to account for the phenomenon of the consciousness of thinking is based upon principles that are epistemologically neutral, and not a point of contention between him and Aquinas. But if my defense of Averroes rests upon his conception of the image and intelligible as correlates, and its later development into the doctrine of the double subject, have we not left this epistemologically neutral ground behind? It is my contention that Aquinas's own development of the Aristotelian doctrine of the dependence of thought upon images, while not identical with that of Averroes, also entails that consciousness of thinking always implies a concomitant act of imaginative awareness.

There are two central aspects of Aquinas's own epistemology which seem to function as analogues to the Averroist principles relating to the links between intellect and imagination. The first is the striking similarity that obtains between the role that Aquinas's doctrine of the intelligible species plays in his noetics, and the role that correlative images play for Averroes in individuating the intelligible. Despite the differences in their views on the plurality and unicity of the intellect, both Aquinas and Averroes face the problem of mediating between the universality of the intelligible and the phenomenon of *intersubjectivity*: both must explain how you and I can have particularized versions of one and the same universal concept. In Averroes's final position, the universality of the intelligible *per se* can only be salvaged by recourse to a separate substance; its sharing by individuals is explained with reference to the necessary connection between the intelligible and images.<sup>60</sup> Since Aquinas upholds the individuality of the intellect

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represent an arbitrary member of its class, the mind is able to consider the characteristics of the class through the apprehension of a particular member of the class. The difference between perceiving a particular and thinking about a universal is a product of the way in which a particular that exemplifies a universal is apprehended. In perception attention is directed upon the individual features of the object. The object is perceived as a particular and the universal is perceived only incidentally. In thought, attention is directed upon the generic features of the object and the object is apprehended as an exemplified universal. It seems likely that Aristotle's distinction between universal and particular cognitive objects, which turns on the way in which an object is apprehended, would not rule out a perceptual awareness of thinking" ("An Aristotelian Theory of Consciousness?" 167).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Averroes's remarks on how his doctrine solves this problem, *Long Commentary*, Bk. 3, comm. 5, 411.707-412.728; Averroes here views his interpretation of Aristotle as the only plausible alternative to the Platonic theory that all learning is recollection.

itself, his solution to the same problem involves arguing that each individual intellect forms for itself an intelligible species, which it abstracts from images to serve as an instrument whereby the extramental object is known as abstract and universal.<sup>61</sup> The intelligible species is not the object known itself, but rather, the means by which (*quo*) the intellect knows real things. Now, in some of his attacks on Averroes, Aquinas stresses that the diversity of intelligible species in my mind and yours is what individuates our respective acts of knowledge. For example, in the *De unitate intellectus*, in the context of upholding the claim that singularity *per se* does not impede intelligibility, Aquinas asserts: “It is therefore one and the same thing which is understood both by me and by you. But it is understood by me in one way and by you in another, that is, by another intelligible species. And my understanding is one thing, and yours, another; and my intellect is one thing, and yours, another.”<sup>62</sup> What Aquinas does not realize is that the relational character of the intelligible with respect to the image, or alternatively, the doctrine of the double subject, performs for Averroes precisely the same function that the intelligible species, as an individuated intention that acts as the instrument by which extramental things are known, performs for Aquinas himself. Both philosophers recognize the need to account for the individuality of thinking: Averroes, however, cannot conceive of any way that an intelligible object, while retaining the universality that makes it an intelligible, can also be multiplied amongst many human knowers.<sup>63</sup> He knows, however, that images are by their very nature

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<sup>61</sup> The *locus classicus* for Aquinas’s exposition of this doctrine is *ST* 1.85.2.

<sup>62</sup> *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 5, 312b226-30 (§12): “Est enim unum quod intelligitur et a me et a te, sed alio intelligitur a me et alio a te, id est alia specie intelligibili; et aliud est intelligere meum et aliud tuum; et alius est intellectus meus et alius tuus.”

<sup>63</sup> It is important to notice that the problem of the individuation of the *intelligible*, though related to the problem of the individuation of the intellect, is nonetheless distinct from it in one important respect. For Aquinas is able to uphold the individuation of the intellect by appealing to his metaphysical views on *esse*, arguing that the human form is a spiritual substance which possesses an act of existence in its own right, which it then conveys to the body (see, e.g., *ST* 1.76.2 ad 2m). But the individual human intellect is just that—an *individual* spiritual substance. If the intelligible species is supposed to be the instrument itself whereby the object is known *as universal*, it is difficult to see how Aquinas’s arguments that particularity does not impede intelligibility are relevant to the problem of intersubjectivity, unless we are speaking of the intellect’s reflexive self-knowledge of its intelligible species. For in the acts of knowledge in question, we are concerned with universal knowledge of the forms of material things, not with knowledge of separate but individual forms. That is, what Aquinas does not explain is how there can be

multiplied, and that they accompany every act of thinking; hence, the most plausible—and economical—explanation for the individuation of thought in his view lies with the image.<sup>64</sup> So there is an analogue in Aquinas to the Averroist correlative image as an individuator of the intelligible: in Aquinas, however, it must be distinguished from the image itself, owing to Aquinas's doctrine that the intellect is individuated. But it is significant that Aquinas recognizes with Averroes the need for some sort of structure to explain the specific links between my individual concepts and the images that I have gathered from my sensible experiences. The function of Averroes's notion of correlative images is thus not foreign to Aquinas, even if the underlying metaphysical explanation of what performs that function differs radically from that

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multiple intelligible species representing the same universal nature in a multiplicity of human minds. In *ST* 1.76.2 ad 3m, he attempts to address this issue by referring to the Avicennian common nature, arguing that an intelligible species is abstracted from the individuating conditions of matter outside the soul, and so is, by its very nature, a universal representation of the thing from which it was abstracted. But this in itself does not address the question of what it is that makes my intelligible species of human being and yours the *same universal*, and this is the question that bothers Averroes. Moreover, it should be remembered the the Avicennian common nature or quiddity as such belongs in a system without intelligible species, where universality is a function of the very presence of a form in an intellect, not merely of commonality. Moreover, Avicenna does not hold that intelligibles are abstracted from images in the first place: his occasionalist view of the relation of sense cognition to intellection means that the problem of the universality of cognition does not even arise for him, since the pure quiddity is prior to both universal and particular. The fact that the same “giver of forms,” i.e. the Agent Intellect, is both the ontological source for the particular forms in the material world, and the noetic source for the universal forms in human minds, guarantees the correspondence between thought and reality. But Aquinas wishes to hold that there is some causal relationship between the form in the particulars, the sensible-imaginable form, and the intelligible species. And once that is the case, the intelligible species itself must be able to account for the new properties of commonality and universality proper to the intelligible order. Simply to say that the intelligible species abstracts from the accidents of the individual particular, and that individuality is not *per se* an impediment to intellection, is not to offer a positive account of the universality of the intelligible species itself.

Similarly, in the *CT* 1.85, 109b116-110a155, Aquinas tries to locate the point of intersection between my act of knowledge and yours in the fact that we know the same object, but through different instruments, i.e. different intelligible species. But this too leaves unsolved the problem of accounting for the universality of the knowledge conveyed by the intelligible species themselves.

<sup>64</sup> It is significant in this regard that the individuality of the intellect as upheld by Aquinas seems to require a multiplication of explanatory media to link the thought of the individual to the extramental object known. Not only is the phantasm required to accompany thought as in Aristotle and Averroes: there is also the need for an intelligible species, as a further intellectual instrument, and after that, for the formation of mental words (definitions and propositions) “in order to judge exterior things” (*ST* 1.85.2 ad 3m). For a discussion of the epistemological problems this view has been thought to raise, see E. P. Mahoney, “Sense, Intellect and Imagination in Albert, Thomas, and Siger,” in N. Kretzmann et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, 602-22 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 608-9. See also Bazán, “*Intellectum Speculativum*,” 432: “Averroes's realism is more immediate: the form that gives both being and intelligibility to things is also present in the image under the cover of individual characteristics and in the act of the material intellect by means of the illuminating and liberating act of the agent intellect.”



given by Averroes.

Moreover, it is clear from the second point of similarity between Aquinas and Averroes that Aquinas does not posit intelligible species to perform the individuating work that images play in Averroes because he does not believe that in practice images do not likewise serve to individuate acts of intellectual cognition. Rather, the need for intelligible species is a consequence of, and not a reason for, the metaphysical doctrine that every human being possesses an individual intellect. For Aquinas, like Averroes, is equally insistent upon the impossibility of exercising any thought, or employing any intelligible species, without also employing an image. Some of the most central principles of Aquinas's epistemology—the conversion to phantasms, the reflective nature of knowledge of the singular, and the various discussions of the diminished knowledge of the separated soul—are based upon the strict adherence to the same Aristotelian dictum that inspired Averroes's doctrine of the correlative image and the double subject. While a full discussion of Aquinas's views on these subjects is beyond the scope of this study, a brief look at Aquinas's general presentation of these doctrines will show why Aquinas himself would have to accept that in *practical* and *experiential* terms, consciousness of intellection can never be severed from consciousness of imagination.

The most obvious locus for illustrating how central the image is to Thomistic epistemology is the well-known discussion in the *Summa theologiae* in which Aquinas argues that “it is impossible for our intellect in the present state of life, in which it is conjoined to a corruptible body, to understand anything in actuality, except by turning towards images.”<sup>65</sup> Here Aquinas cites, in support of this claim, evidence that is familiar from Aristotelian psychology: (1) that injury to the organ of imagination, the brain, impedes not only the acquisition of new concepts, but also the exercise of those already acquired; and (2) that we know from our own experience that we always entertain exemplary images when exercising abstract thought, in the way that

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<sup>65</sup> *ST* 1.84.7.

geometers do when they draw diagrams to aid in the construction of their proofs. Aquinas, then, presents the Aristotelian dictum that the soul cannot think without images as a basic fact of everyday experience. It is also a fact that can be explained, however, on the basis of the principle that the proper object of an embodied human intellect is a “quiddity or nature existing in a material body” (*quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens*). Since the natures of material things are essentially such that they must subsist in individual, material particulars, any adequate understanding of them requires that they be represented as existing in the individual. And this is something that can only be done by a human knower with the aid of sensation and imagination. Moreover, in this article Aquinas links the intellect’s dependence upon the image to the Aristotelian rejection of separately subsistent Platonic ideas, in much the same way as Averroes derives his notion of the image as the correlative of the intelligible from the Aristotelian rejection of Platonism.<sup>66</sup> And in some ways Aquinas is an even more radical adherent of the view that thought depends upon images than is Averroes. For Averroes tries to restrict the intellect’s dependence upon images to those acts of knowledge whose objects are material forms. When separate forms are known directly, through the process of conjunction with the Agent Intellect, Averroes holds that the need for images is by-passed; here, presumably, the individual’s consciousness of participation in thought is subsumed under the material-agent intellect’s absorption in the activity of self-knowledge proper to its own nature.<sup>67</sup> Aquinas,

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.: “De ratione autem huius naturae est quod in aliquo individuo existat, quod non est absque materia corporali; sicut de ratione naturae lapidis est quod sit in hoc lapide, et de ratione naturae equi est quod sit in hoc equo, et sic de aliis. Unde natura lapidis, vel cuiuscumque materialis rei, cognosci non potest complete et vere, nisi secundum quod cognoscitur ut in particulari existens. Particulare autem apprehendimus per sensum et imaginationem. Et ideo necesse est ad hoc quod intellectus intelligat suum obiectum proprium, quod convertat se ad phantasmata, ut speculetur naturam universalem in particulari existentem. Si autem proprium obiectum intellectus nostri esset forma separata; vel si formae rerum sensibilium subsisterent non in particularibus, secundum Platonicos, non oporteret quod intellectus noster semper intelligendo converteret se ad phantasmata.”

<sup>67</sup> This is the theme of the *Long Commentary*, Bk. 5, comm. 36, and of the Madrid appendix to the *Epitome of the “De anima,”* 90-95. The entire *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction* is also devoted to this question. This restriction explains why Averroes glosses Aristotle’s remark at 431a16-17 as follows: “Idest, et quia proportio ymaginum ad intellectum materiale est sicut proportio sensibilium ad sensum, ideo necesse fuit ut intellectus materialis non intelligat aliquod sensibile absque ymaginatione” (*Long Commentary*, Bk. 3, comm. 30, 469.22-25; emphasis added).

however, requires conversion to phantasms even in our knowledge of God and the other separate substances in this life: it is a condition of the embodied state of the human intellect, not a condition imposed by the limited natures of a restricted range of the intellect's possible objects.<sup>68</sup>

Perhaps the most striking indication of the seriousness with which Aquinas takes the human intellect's dependence upon images, however, is found in his discussions of the diminished nature of the separated soul's knowledge. In these discussions, Aquinas claims that because the human intellect is the lowest among intellectual creatures, even its intellectual cognition is dependent upon images, not only with respect to its acquisition, but also its subsequent exercise. The soul's intellectual operations require the body for their perfection and fulfillment. Until that body is resurrected and reunited with the intellect, Aquinas argues, the intellect cannot help but suffer some loss of acuity in its knowledge, for as separated from its body, it exists in a non-natural state. While Aquinas argues that separated souls continue to receive an influx of intelligible species directly from God, and so are not cut off from their proper activities entirely, Aquinas clearly believes that this mode of knowledge, despite its divine origin, is less perfect, because more general and confused, than the embodied soul's knowledge which is accompanied by distinct and concrete images.<sup>69</sup>

Given the strength of Aquinas's adherence to the dependence of thought upon images, as evidenced in the foregoing texts, it is most surprising that he attempts to argue in the *De unitate intellectus* that Averroes's view of conjunction through images cannot individuate the act of intellection because images are only *preambula* "preparations" for intellection:

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<sup>68</sup> See, for example, *ST* 1.84.7 ad 3m; 1.88.1; and *Quaestiones de anima*, q. 16.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, *ST* 1.89, passim; and *Quaestiones de anima*, qq. 15, 18-20. Aquinas emphasizes in the latter text that the confused nature of the separated soul's knowledge is especially evident when the knowledge bears upon the singular as such.

For the sake of brevity, I have not considered the specifics of Aquinas's views on knowledge of the singular by reflection, although these views are represented in part by the texts on the soul's knowledge of itself discussed earlier. Representative treatments of this aspect of Aquinas's thought can be found in *ST* 1.86.1, and *De veritate*, 2.6. Note that Aquinas uses the term *reflexio* to refer to the specific focusing on phantasms that gives the intellect indirect knowledge of the singular as such; he uses the term *conversio* to refer to the act of considering a universal intelligible by exemplifying it in the image of one of its particular instances (see the passage quoted in n. 27 above).

For the phantasms are preparations for the action of the intellect, as colors are for the act of sight.<sup>70</sup> Therefore the act of the intellect would not be diversified by their diversity, especially in respect to one intelligible. Yet [Averroes and his followers] hold that it is by these phantasms that the knowledge of this man and the knowledge of that man are diverse, in so far as this man understands those things of which he has phantasms, and that man understands other things of which he has phantasms.<sup>71</sup>

But as we have just seen, images are hardly mere *preambula* of intellection, even for Aquinas, let alone for Averroes himself.<sup>72</sup> They are absolutely essential not only for the acquisition of universal concepts, but also for their subsequent conscious exercise; even a disembodied soul is in some way impoverished when its access to images is cut off. There is nothing, then, that prevents the image from functioning as an individuating principle for acts of intellectual cognition in either the Averroist or the Thomistic systems. Unless the imagination, like the wall and the stone, is itself devoid of consciousness, there would seem to be no practical barrier to its functioning as a source of consciousness for the intellectual acts it accompanies. The phenomenon would seem to be saved.

#### IV. Conclusion: Imagination and Consciousness

Despite their initial plausibility, the Thomistic objections to Averroes which bear upon the

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<sup>70</sup> For the view that color is the instrument of vision, not the object seen, a view paralleling Aquinas's position on intelligible species, cf. *SCG* 2.75, 474b50-54: "Habet se igitur species intelligibilis recepta in intellectu possibile, intelligendo, sicut id quo intelligitur; sicut et species coloris in oculo non est id quod videtur, sed id quo videmus."

<sup>71</sup> *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 4, 308b117-24 (§91; Zedler trans., 61).

<sup>72</sup> It is possible that Aquinas was able to overlook this rather obvious tension between his own professed theory of knowledge and his critique of Averroes because Averroes himself tends to focus on the role of the imagination as a moving cause of intellection in the arguments for unicity that appear in the *Long Commentary*, e.g., Bk. 3, comm. 5, 405.544-406.565; 407.584-87. The reason for this is probably Averroes's repudiation of his earlier agreement with Alexander and Ibn Bājjah, on the grounds that imagination cannot be both mover and recipient of the intelligibles, since nothing can move or receive itself (*ibid.*, 398.332-43; 400.395-99). But given the close connection between the image and the intelligible, as well as the notion of the image as the subject of truth, it is clear that Averroes does not need to distinguish sharply between the moving and informing or content-bearing roles of images. But Aquinas's notion of the intelligible species, as a new, individuated instrument of intellectual cognition, does introduce such a rift between the two functions of the image, since the act whereby the image moves the intellect in the process of abstraction is prior to and distinct from the act whereby it is later recalled for the exercise of the intelligible species to which it gave rise.

problem of intellectual self-awareness are inconclusive as refutations of the Averroist noetic. From the perspective of Aquinas's own principles, the soul has no immediate quidditative knowledge of itself or its operations, but rather, only comes to know itself in this way indirectly and by reflection. Hence the appeal to the personal experience of intellectual self-awareness itself cannot legitimately be used by Aquinas as proof that the intellect's *essential nature* is individuated.<sup>73</sup> And even Aquinas's attempt to argue more specifically that Averroes has turned the individual into a passive object of thought, rather than a conscious, knowing subject, requires that we ignore the central role played by imagination in all acts of human cognition, on Aquinas's own principles as well as on those of Averroes. If Aquinas's criticisms of Averroes's doctrine of unicity are to hold, they can do so only on metaphysical grounds; and once this is recognized, we must leave behind the philosophically neutral territory of experience for rockier terrain.

I have suggested throughout this discussion that it is surprising to find that in the course of engaging in his polemic against unicity, Aquinas (along with many of his later readers) so easily overlooks the aspects of the Aristotelian heritage he shares with Averroes. The doctrines to which I have alluded—in particular the notion of the intellect's *conversio* to the image—are not obscure or tangential to Aquinas's views on human knowledge; rather, they have long been acknowledged as some of the most important amongst Aquinas's contributions to the history of epistemology. It is certainly understandable that Aquinas opposed the doctrine of unicity on metaphysical, religious, and ethical grounds. But one does not usually expect Aquinas to engage in polemical discussions which require him to betray his own beliefs. Indeed, Aquinas's polemical works themselves emphasize the importance of meeting one's opponents on a level

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<sup>73</sup> Ironically, in the *ST*, 1.87.1, Aquinas uses as evidence against the Augustinian position on the immediacy of self-knowledge the fact that people have made mistakes about the nature of the soul. Given that knowledge of the soul's nature requires careful and subtle inquiry, "many people were unaware of the nature of the soul, and many of them also erred concerning its nature" (*Unde et multi naturam animae ignorant, et multi etiam circa naturam animae erraverunt*). Presumably, Averroes would be included among those who had thus erred.

playing field, and of engaging in only the most rationally convincing arguments.<sup>74</sup> As a concluding reflection, I would like to offer one possible reason why Aquinas might so easily have neglected his own professed views on imagination and intellectual self-awareness in his anti-Averroist writings—a reason that is relevant to these points of epistemology themselves, and not merely conditioned by the heated historical climate in which these polemical writings were composed.

At the end of the preceding section, I suggested that the only remaining barrier to the imagination acting as a source of consciousness of intellectual activity would be a strict application to imagination of the wall-analogy found in the second of Aquinas's two objections to unicity examined in this study. If the imagination, despite its key role in the exercise of thought, were not viewed by Aquinas as an essentially conscious or dynamic faculty, it is quite possible that he would have difficulty with the proposal to accord it an active, even essential, role in general human self-awareness, and particularly in awareness of thinking. It is obvious that Aquinas could not hold that the imagination is totally unconscious or entirely incapable of reflective awareness: references to sensible self-awareness are common in Aquinas's discussions of the soul's knowledge of itself, and the idea that the senses are aware of their own activity is a basic part of the Aristotelian psychology to which Aquinas generally adheres.<sup>75</sup> However, there are strong indications that Aquinas's views on the cognitive capacities of the imagination would make it difficult for him to view it, in its own right, as sufficiently autonomous to play the central role it is accorded in Averroes's psychology.

This is evident, for example, in the general tendency which Aquinas displays towards

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<sup>74</sup> The *De unitate intellectus* emphasizes that Averroes and his followers will be defeated by arguments based only on what is rationally convincing, or on the obvious clashes between their views and the views of Aristotle they claim to be expounding. See especially chap. 1, 291a20-b38 (prooemium, §2). And of course, there is Aquinas's well-known statement of the proper way to argue against non-believers in *SCG* 1.9, 22a1-b2, in which Aquinas stresses the importance of using only demonstrative or probable arguments, lest non-believers should think that the Christian faith is based upon weak arguments.

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, *De anima* 3.2.425b12-25.

emphasizing the passivity of all the cognitive powers within the sensitive soul, and *a fortiori* of the imagination. A striking example of this occurs in a passage from the *Commentary on the "De anima,"* where Aquinas is offering an explanation of how the sensible form received into the common sense takes on a more noble and spiritual mode of existence than it has in the sense organs of the proper senses. According to Aquinas, the increasing levels of spirituality found in the internal senses are simply a function of the way in which the form is passively received into the sense powers: the internal senses themselves perform no active operation to effect this transformation of the sensible form akin to the agent intellect's operations upon images. These observations, occasioned by specific reflections on the nature of the *sensus communis*, lead Aquinas to make two important points about the sensitive soul as a whole: (1) that all its powers are passive, not active; and (2) that no power can be simultaneously active and passive:

And in this way the common sense receives [forms] in a more noble way than the proper sense, on account of the fact that the sensitive power is considered in the common sense as in a root, and less divided. Nor is it necessary that the common sense make the species which has been received into the organ come to be in itself through some action. For all of the powers of the sensitive part are passive; nor is it possible for one power to be both active and passive.<sup>76</sup>

Now this general principle of the passivity of the sensitive soul has obvious repercussions for Aquinas's view of imagination: although he accepts the notion of compositive or creative imagination (i.e. the creation of fictional images, like the proverbial golden mountain) in his discussions of the internal senses, there are strong indications that in his view, the active power in this process is the rational soul using the images, not the imaginative soul itself. Aquinas openly declares in the *Commentary on the "De anima"* that "imagination neither composes nor

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<sup>76</sup> *In 2 De anima*, chap. 27, 185b219-186a228 (Bk. 3, lect. 3, n. 612). Cf. *ST* 1.79.3 ad 1m: "Et sic patet quod in parte nutritiva omnes potentiae sunt activae; in parte autem sensitiva, omnes passivae; in parte vero intellectiva est aliquid activum, et aliquid passivum."

divides.”<sup>77</sup> And his general presentations of the distinctions amongst the various internal senses clearly imply that since the ability to combine and divide images at will is a distinctively human power, it must ultimately be a function of reason. Thus, in the *Summa theologiae*’s enumeration of the internal senses, *phantasia* or imagination is identified solely as a retentive power which preserves sense images when the sensible object is no longer present to the percipient. While Aquinas does argue that a separate power of compositive imagination is not needed because the power of retentive imagination is sufficient to explain the creation of fictive images, his point seems to be simply that no further *internal sense power* over and above the ability to retain images is required to account for this capacity, since reason is the agent in human beings that is actually responsible for the creative manipulation of images. If the senses, internal and external alike, are all passive, and if *phantasia* by itself neither composes nor divides, clearly only reason, and not imagination, is capable of executing this active and creative operation.<sup>78</sup>

It is my contention that Averroes’ ability to save the phenomenon of individual intellectual self-awareness through the imaginative faculty’s close connection with the intellect is facilitated in large measure by a conception of the imagination that is more dynamic and autonomous than that of Aquinas. Such a claim may seem surprising, given the fact that in the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas cites Averroes’ *Epitome of the “Parva naturalia”* in support of his general rejection of Avicenna’s positing of a distinct power of compositive imagination, and more importantly, of his specific claim that this ability is unique to humans.<sup>79</sup> Despite this apparent agreement, however,

<sup>77</sup> *In 2 De anima*, chap. 28, 191b281-82 (Bk. 3, lect. 4, n. 635).

<sup>78</sup> See *ST* 1.78.4, in which Aquinas offers a general overview of the internal senses: “Sed ista operatio non apparet in aliis animalibus ab homine, in quo ad hoc sufficit virtus imaginativa. Cui etiam hanc actionem attribuit Averroes, in libro quodam quem fecit *de Sensu et Sensibilibus*.” That Aquinas assumes the intellect is responsible for the composing and dividing of images is evident from an aside found in *ST* 1.81.3 ad 3m: “Sed vires interiores tam appetitivae quam apprehensivae non indigent exterioribus rebus. Et ideo *subduntur imperio rationis*, quae potest non solum instigare vel mitigare affectus appetitivae virtutis, *sed etiam formare imaginativae virtutis phantasmata*” (emphasis added). Mahoney, “Sense, Intellect and Imagination,” 606-7, also interprets Aquinas to be saying that in its compositive activities, “imagination operates in conjunction with the human intellect.”

<sup>79</sup> Aquinas cites Averroes’ *Epitome of the “Parva naturalia”* in *ST* 1.78.4 (see the preceding note) in support of the elimination of compositive imagination from the internal senses. Aquinas is probably referring to chap. 3 of Averroes’ *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-iss wa-al-ma\_s’s* (*Epitome of the Parva naturalia*), which examines the role of



when one considers more closely the differences between Averroes's and Aquinas's approaches to the imaginative faculties, it appears that Averroes is more willing than Aquinas to grant that the imagination is, in its own right, capable of the sort of activity that would allow it to function more generally as the seat of personal consciousness on all levels. This is principally because Averroes operates against the background of Islamic philosophy, in which the imagination, from at least the time of al-Fārābī onwards, is viewed not only as a passive and representative faculty, but also an active, creative, and mimetic one, able to imitate not only sensibles, but even intelligibles.<sup>80</sup> In virtue of his ties to this tradition, Averroes is constantly led, in his psychological writings, to stress the differences between animal and human imagination, and in particular to acknowledge the active capacities of the human imagination.<sup>81</sup>

The dynamic nature of Averroes's view of imagination can best be exemplified for our purposes by focusing on two aspects of Averroes's description of imagination: first, Averroes's

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imagination in dreams. See the Arabic edition by H. A. Blumberg (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1972), 68.9-69.9; medieval Latin version ed. E. L. Shields and H. A. Blumberg, *Compendia librorum Aristotelis qui Parva naturalia vocantur* (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1949), 96.48-98.65; English translation by H. A. Blumberg (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1961), 40-41. It is noteworthy, however, that in this passage Averroes uses the term associated with *compositive*, not *retentive*, imagination in Arabic, *al-mutakhayyilah*. Moreover, he explicitly attributes combinatory activity to the imagination itself: indeed, this passage reflects the traditional Arabic construal of imagination as a continuously active, mimetic faculty, more dynamic than the purely passive imaginative power recognized by Aquinas.

In fact, Averroes's and Aquinas's shared disagreement with Avicenna on the number and division of the internal senses is somewhat more complicated than Aquinas himself suggests. In a text which Aquinas himself did not have available in Latin translation, Averroes makes it clear that it is not the compositive imagination itself with which he takes issue, but the estimative power, which is the power that controls the compositive imagination in Avicenna's scheme of internal senses. See *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (Incoherence of "The Incoherence"), ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1930), 543-53; English translation by Simon Van Den Bergh, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 333-41.

<sup>80</sup> See especially Fārābī's *Al-Madīnah al-fāṣilah* (The Virtuous City), ed. and trans. Richard Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 210.14-212.9. The process whereby intelligibles are imitated is discussed at 214.5-216.1, and 218.5-10. For a discussion of this aspect of Arabic views on imagination, see my *Logic and Aristotle's "Rhetoric" and "Poetics" in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 192-208. For a consideration of Greek texts in which *phantasia* and *mimēsis* come to be associated, see Gerard Watson, *Phantasia in Classical Thought* (Galway, Ireland: Galway University Press, 1988), 59-161.

<sup>81</sup> See *Epitome of the "De anima,"* 87.7-9: "And through this disposition which is found in a human being in the imaginative forms, the imaginative soul here differs from the imaginative soul in animals, just as the nutritive soul in plants differs from the nutritive soul in animals through the disposition which is in the latter for receiving the sensibles." Cf. 71.3-13, where a similar point is made regarding the human practical intellect.

tendency to strengthen the ability of imagination to reproduce the full effect of a present sensible object; and second, his emphasis on the voluntary and creative capacities of the imagination. Both of these developments are rooted in the Islamic tradition's tendency to view the imagination as an imitative faculty, the faculty responsible for the activities of Aristotelian *phantasia*.

The first of these points represents a deliberate and notable shift in emphasis from Aristotle. In both the *Long* and *Middle Commentaries* on the *De anima*, Averroes makes a subtle alteration in Aristotle's argument that the percipient need not be affected emotively by images, since human beings are like mere spectators when considering images that they have consciously and voluntarily evoked. In Averroes, this "mere spectator" view of the imagination is downplayed, and the ability of the imagination to mimic the presence of the sensible is strengthened. Thus, unlike Aristotle, Averroes argues that while the emotive response that people have to images may differ in degree from the reaction they have to a present sensible, images are nonetheless able to evoke an authentic emotive response in us, because the imitative character of an image always suggests the future possibility that such an object can be experienced by us.<sup>82</sup> The image's ability to represent the external world in its own right is thus strengthened by Averroes, and the image takes on a more compelling cognitive, as well as emotive, force.

Despite his rejection of the "mere spectator" view of imagination, however, Averroes accepts, and even strengthens, the grounds upon which Aristotle had argued that we look upon images dispassionately: namely, Aristotle's claim that the activities of the imagination are voluntary and under our control. In this move Averroes relies heavily upon the internal sense tradition's notion of imagination as intrinsically mimetic, and able to create new images never

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<sup>82</sup> See *De anima* 3.3.427b21-24; Averroes, *Middle Commentary*, 115.6-12 (at 427b6-24); *Long Commentary*, Bk. 2, comm. 154, 364.10-23.

before experienced by it.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Averroes is insistent that while this creative power is unique to humans, it is nonetheless the imagination itself, or at least the internal sense powers as a whole, that performs these compositive functions.<sup>84</sup> Thus Averroes is able to declare of imagination: “But composition and division of these traces [of the sensibles] also belongs to this power, and for this reason it is active in some respect, but passive in another.”<sup>85</sup> Unlike Aquinas, then, Averroes holds that imagination is truly an active power, capable of eliciting strong and impassioned reactions in the human subject. And because it is an active power, the imagination as conceived by Averroes also possesses the capacity for the sort of conscious, voluntary activity that seems to be lacking in the Thomistic conception of imagination.<sup>86</sup>

Neither Averroes nor Aquinas offers us a detailed enough *ex professo* account of imagination and the internal senses to allow the foregoing comparisons to be conclusive, but the differences in emphasis in the two men’s various discussions of the imaginative power do appear to provide some ground for the claim that Averroes’s general tendency is to accord more autonomy to the imagination as a cognitive power in its own right. This, combined with Averroes’s more direct interpretation of the Aristotelian maxim that the soul never thinks without imagination, would

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<sup>83</sup> *Epitome of the “De anima,”* 60.7-15; 64.5-16; *Middle Commentary*, 115.6-10 (at 427b6); Ivry trans., 12. In the *Epitome*, Averroes seems to contradict himself: in the first passage cited, he argues that imagination is voluntary; in the second that it is necessary. This in fact reflects the view, common amongst the Islamic Aristotelians, that imagination is a faculty that is by its nature continually composing and dividing its images, at random and subconsciously. But it is also capable of harnessing that activity and directing it towards a specific end.

<sup>84</sup> *Epitome of the “De anima,”* 60.7-12.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.14-16.

<sup>86</sup> It would be misleading to suggest that because the Averroist conception of imagination is more dynamic than the Thomistic, Averroes thereby accords imagination a more exalted status amongst the soul’s powers. In practice, Averroes makes imagination essential to the individual exercise of thought, and allows it to perform active as well as passive operations. But because Averroes upholds the possibility of a purely intellectual act of knowledge in the form of conjunction between the Agent and Material intellects, and identifies this act as the ultimate goal of human intellectual cognition, he tends to view purely imaginative modes of cognition as imperfect and incomplete. The most explicit expression of this view occurs at the end of Averroes’s *Jawāmi’ kitāb al-shi’r* (*Epitome of the Poetics*), where Averroes declares that because poetics aims to evoke purely imaginative acts of representation, it does not contribute anything to the ultimate perfection of a human being: “Thus, the art of poetics is that which enables a person to devise an imaginative representation for each particular thing in the most complete manner possible for it. However, these are perfections external to the primary human perfection.” See *Averroës’ Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle’s “Topics,” “Rhetoric,” and “Poetics,”* ed. and trans. C. E. Butterworth (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1977), §4, Arabic 205.10-12; trans., 84 (slightly modified).

allow Averroes to argue plausibly that it is through the imagination, in its association with the material intellect, that the individual is able to be an active and conscious partner in the act of thinking.

The fact that Averroes's principles are able to provide a plausible account of our consciousness of intellection does not of itself vindicate the entire Averroist epistemology and anthropology. However, the attempt to understand how Averroes might have responded to the most fundamental difficulties in his position has some importance beyond the attempt to provide the Commentator with the sympathetic exegesis that he seldom receives. Aristotelian psychology does not lend itself well to addressing problems of consciousness and self-awareness, and neither Aquinas nor Averroes offers much in the way of an explicit elaboration upon these themes. The debate within the Aristotelian tradition over the issue of unicity thus has the advantage of highlighting the complexities involved in offering a satisfactory account of self-awareness based on Aristotelian principles. Despite the difficulties in his polemic against Averroes on these points, it is to Aquinas's credit that he recognized just how central the problems of consciousness and self-awareness are to the rival interpretations of Aristotle's difficult chapters on the intellect in the *De anima*.