

Reason Reflecting on Reason: Philosophy, Rationality and the Intellect in the Medieval Islamic and Christian Traditions

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I. Introduction

If there is any period in the history of philosophy for which the theme of “Reason in Context” has a special resonance, it is the later Middle Ages. With the influx of Latin translations of Arabic philosophical texts that began in the mid-12th century, Christian theologians were inundated with materials from a rationalist intellectual tradition far different from their own. Whereas most medieval theologians adhered to the Augustinian understanding of the relation between faith and reason neatly summarized in Anselm’s formulation, *fides quaerens intellectum*, their Arabic philosophical sources would have found such a maxim baffling, to say the least.¹ So there is little wonder that the ensuing efforts to assimilate Arabic philosophical doctrines into the theological framework of the Christian West culminated in what might be termed the “culture wars” of the Middle Ages, the Condemnations of 1270 and 1277.²

While the controversies of the 1270’s and their links to the assimilation of Arabic philosophy in the West are well-known events in the history of medieval philosophy, the stark differences between the foundational assumptions of Arabic and Latin philosophers regarding the nature of religion, revelation, and reason, are only vaguely recognized. There is often an implicit assumption that, whatever the differences between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, the adherents of the three Abrahamic religions came from societies in which religious institutions and traditions played a central role. Thus, Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes must have had an attitude to their religion that parallels the

attitudes of an Anselm, Aquinas, or Bonaventure to theirs. But nothing could be further from the truth. Though Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes considered themselves devout Muslims (at least as far as one can tell these things about historical figures)--and though Averroes was an active jurist and the author of an important textbook of Islamic law³--the three main Islamic Aristotelians had a view of the essential nature of religion that made it entirely subordinate to rational understanding. On that view, one could legitimately and sincerely claim full adherence to a religious tradition even if one's rational beliefs contravened the external teachings of that tradition.

My aim in this paper is to explore the ramifications that the Islamic philosophers' understanding of the relations between philosophy and religion had upon the range of solutions that were available to them in dealing with philosophical issues, when compared with the options that were acceptable to their counterparts in the Christian West. As a sort of "case study" of how these differing attitudes play out in actual philosophical discussions, I will then consider to Averroes's notorious doctrine of the unicity of the intellect (often referred to incorrectly as "monopsychism") and the various ways it was interpreted and received by medieval Latin authors.⁴

II. The Fārābīan Legacy: The Priority of Philosophy over Religion

The account of the nature of religion and its historical and epistemological relations to philosophy that came to predominate in Islamic philosophy has its origins in Al-Fārābī (ca. 870-950). Fārābī articulates his theory most fully in the *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* (*Book of Letters*) which argues for both the natural and temporal priority of philosophy to religion. According to the image Fārābī employs in this text, philosophy is the master and religion

is its servant.⁵ Fārābī's main justification for this claim is based upon an analysis of the epistemic status of philosophy when compared with the other products of human civilization. The core assertion on which Fārābī rests his case is the claim that Aristotle's theory of demonstration put forward in the *Posterior Analytics* represents the best and indeed the only method by which epistemic certitude (*yaqīn*) can be attained. All the other modes of discourse and argumentation available to human investigators are evaluated in accordance with the degree to which they are able to approximate the certitude conferred by demonstrative methods. Fārābī's classification of the non-demonstrative methods uses the Aristotelian *Organon*, as transmitted through the Greek Commentators of the school of Alexandria, as its organizing principle. This is of particular importance to his assessment of the nature of religion, since the Alexandrian tradition classified both Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and his *Poetics* as logical texts which, along with the *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations*, analyzed the various forms of argumentation that are epistemically inferior and in some cases propaedeutic to demonstration.⁶

On the basis of this understanding of the nature of philosophy and its proper method, Fārābī presents an evolutionary account of human civilization according to which human societies progress by discovering logical methods that come closer and closer to the demonstrative ideal. The least certain methods--poetics and rhetoric, which Fārābī calls the "popular arts"--develop first. Their epistemic goals are to produce acts of imagination rather than properly intellectual understanding, in the case of poetics, and persuasive acceptance rather than direct understanding of the truth, in the case of rhetoric. Eventually the sophistical and dialectical strands that are undifferentiated in rhetoric are

sorted out, and dialectic emerges as a method for discovering the truth. Dialectic as Fārābī understands it attains a state that is approximate to certitude: its methods are described in Aristotle's *Topics*, and it is identified by Fārābī as the level of intellectual development reached by Socrates and Plato. Only with Aristotle is the demonstrative method--and accordingly philosophy itself--brought to perfection.⁷

Leaving aside the puzzling features of this account--its blending of human and Greek history into a seamless whole, and its confident pronouncement of Aristotle's "perfection" of philosophy itself--Fārābī's historical narrative is designed to establish a clear hierarchy of logical methods that serve to justify his argument for the natural subordination of religion to philosophy. On the ideal account that Fārābī has given thus far, religion has not yet emerged as a human institution; only after philosophy has been perfected, and the proper roles of dialectic, rhetoric and poetics have been sorted out, is human society in a position to develop religion. A philosopher who is also a gifted orator and poet emerges as the prophet and Lawgiver for such a society. He crafts a religion designed to utilize poetics and rhetoric as the means whereby he can communicate the truths discovered by philosophy to the non-philosophical populace. And the leaders of the religion he founds will use dialectical and rhetorical methods to explain, uphold, and defend its traditions and laws against both internal detractors and external enemies.⁸

And whenever religion is made a human thing it is posterior in time to philosophy, and in general too, since through it one only seeks to teach the masses the theoretical and practical matters which have been discovered in

philosophy in ways which make the understanding of these things easy for them, through persuasion or the evoking of images or by the two together.⁹

There are two crucial but implicit assumptions which inform Fārābī's picture of the relations between philosophy and religion that I have just sketched:

1. The first is an extreme and optimistic rationalism according to which there is nothing in the world so mysterious as to be impenetrable to the unaided human intellect. Humans are capable of attaining complete, certain, demonstrative knowledge in all practical and theoretical matters. It is the attainment of this certitude that constitutes the goal and aim of philosophy.
2. The second assumption, by contrast, is a deeply pessimistic view of the distribution of rationality amongst individual humans. While all human beings are essentially rational in some measure, their rationality admits of rather marked degrees. Thus humans can be divided into an intellectual elite, the philosophers, who are capable of discovering and comprehending the unadulterated truth; and the masses, who in some measure fall short of the philosophical ideal. Within the ranks of the masses themselves, there are elites and commoners. According to Fārābī, theologians do belong to this elite, but this makes them special only relative to their own religion: "It must be known," Fārābī declares, "that [the theologian] is also one of the elite, but in relation to the people of this religion only. For it is the philosopher who is elite in relation to all people and all nations."¹⁰

Fārābī thus sees religion as the means for closing the gap between these two conceptions of rationality. Religion is required in order to compensate for the intellectual deficiencies of the masses. And since religion is merely an imitation of philosophy suited for the people of a particular culture, Fārābī allows that there may be a multitude of distinct though equally virtuous religions. A religion is virtuous just in case its founder was truly a philosopher whose personal knowledge of the truth attained the utmost level of demonstrative certitude.¹¹

Fārābī's picture of the nature of philosophy and its relation to religion was embraced with little modification by his chief successors among the *falāsifah*, Avicenna and Averroes.¹² Indeed, the defense of philosophy that Averroes mounts in his *Decisive Treatise* against the charges of "unbelief" leveled by al-Ghazālī against Avicenna and Fārābī can best be seen as an interpretation of Fārābī's thesis that true philosophy and any virtuous religion are in principle in harmony with each other, since "truth does not oppose truth but accords with it and bears witness to it."¹³ Nonetheless, as Fārābī himself notes in the *Book of Letters*, because the theologians, as mere practitioners of dialectic, lack a complete and certain understanding of the truth, they often mistake the philosophers for their enemies and the enemies of the faith. Thus, Fārābī declares, "it is clear that in every religion there is opposition to philosophy, for in the art of theology there is opposition to philosophy."¹⁴

Given a Fārābīan analysis of the roots of such inevitable conflicts, it seems that the only person who could truly adjudicate between the competing claims of the philosophers and theologians is someone with a foot in both camps--a true philosopher who is also

learned in theology and accorded juridical authority within his own religious tradition. And as we know, Averroes himself was such a person--the foremost representative of the *falāsifah* in al-Andalūs, and erstwhile chief justice (*qāḍī*) Cordoba. In the *Decisive Treatise*, then, Averroes offers a professional legal opinion, based on the canons of Islamic jurisprudence, in defense of the right, and even the duty, of the philosophically-minded to pursue demonstrative certitude.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to rehearse the details of Averroes's clever argument in the *Decisive Treatise*--one of the best known texts written by an Islamic philosopher--I do want to note the degree to which this Averroist text depends upon the Fārābīan theses I have just outlined. The *Decisive Treatise* offers a legal opinion that, in effect, it is the philosopher who is the ultimate judge and adjudicator of the truth. But this is not merely the case from the perspective of philosophy. A crucial point in Averroes's argument that can only be appreciated fully against the backdrop of the Fārābīan framework is that even the determination of how to interpret disputed passages in Scripture--and hence to determine what positions do and do not constitute unbelief (*kufr*)--ultimately belongs to the philosopher. This is not only because, as members of the intellectual elites within their own religion, their opinions make up part of the community's consensus of belief (*ijmā'*);¹⁵ it is also because the philosophers alone truly understand the logic and language of Scripture itself. The arts of rhetoric and poetics hold the key to determining how Scripture is to be interpreted; but rhetoric and poetics are logical arts whose true purpose can only be gleaned in comparison with the ultimate logical goals of demonstration. Hence it is the philosopher who determines not only what

is true, but even what is a legitimate reflection and imitation of the truth.¹⁶ The philosopher, then, is the ultimate scriptural exegete. Indeed, al-Ghazālī's reckless accusations of heresy against the philosophers show, in Averroes's eyes, just how inept the theologians have become even at the task of defending religion that is properly theirs. For by persecuting innocent philosophers in their earnest efforts to fulfill their duty to understand God's creation, Ghazālī has unwittingly exposed common believers to controversies that they have no means to adjudicate for themselves; he thus threatens to undermine the very purpose of religion itself, namely, to allow ordinary people a chance to share in the knowledge of philosophy and fulfill their rational natures to the fullest extent that their natural abilities allow.¹⁷

III. Arabic Philosophy and the West: A Clash of Ideals

While the Latin West had no knowledge of either Fārābī's *Book of Letters* nor even the *Decisive Treatise*, Latin authors soon came to recognize the clash between their own view of the relations between philosophy and religion, and the products of philosophical reasoning they encountered in the writings of their counterparts in the Islamic tradition. Indeed, the very institutional context into which Islamic philosophical rationalism was introduced in the West epitomized the stark contrast between the assumptions under which philosophers in the two traditions operated.¹⁸ The universities and *studia* in which the Latin translations of Aristotle and his Arabic interpreters were studied were ecclesiastical institutions, and the very order of study followed in the University curriculum, in which philosophy was studied in the "undergraduate" Faculty of Arts and theology was reserved for "graduate" school--represented a blatant contravention of the

natural Fārābīan order--the servant had become the “queen” of the sciences! It is hardly surprising, then, that even amongst those in West who were most sympathetic with Arabic philosophy, the Latin Averroists, no one openly asserted the supremacy of philosophy over theology or of reason over faith. There is nothing resembling Fārābī’s brand of rationalism in the West.

Let me offer a few examples of what I mean. First of all, let us look at the so-called “double truth” theory, which Bishop Stephen Tempier, in the prologue to the Condemnations of 1277, claims was espoused by some Arts Masters: “For they say that these things are true according to philosophy, but not according to the Catholic faith, as if there were two contrary truths and as if the truth of Sacred Scripture were contradicted by the truth in the sayings of the accursed pagans....”¹⁹ Even according to Tempier’s presumably uncharitable reading of their views, the alleged adherents of the double truth thesis cede far more ground to the realm of religion than would any of the *falāsifah*. According to the targets of the Condemnations, the philosophically problematic passages within revealed Scriptural texts are still true propositions. By contrast, the whole point of the Fārābīan account of religion is that its language and argumentation are not literal and propositional, but imaginative and metaphorical. There is only one truth, the truth of reason; religious statements may happen to be true as well, but their main function is to provide an appropriate imitation of the truth.

By the same token, both Fārābī and Averroes would no doubt be puzzled by the epistemological implications of disclaimers such as those inserted by Siger of Brabant into his controversial interpretations of Aristotle’s *De anima* inspired by Averroes’s *Long*

Commentary on the text. Siger too reflects his culture's assumption that conflicts between philosophy and faith are to be resolved in favor of the latter, since faith has access to truths that surpass the understanding of unaided human reason. To give just one example, at the end of question 7 of his *De anima intellectiva*, having failed to find any rationally acceptable account of the intellect's individuation on Aristotelian principles, Siger simply gives up, taking refuge in the higher truths of revelation: "I acknowledge that I myself have been in doubt for quite some time both as to what should be held in the light of natural reason about this point and as to what the Philosopher thought about it. In such doubt one must hold fast to the faith, which surpasses all human reasoning."²⁰

The few points of agreement that one does find between Islamic philosophers and Christian theologians come from somewhat unexpected quarters. Thomas Aquinas, in the opening chapters of the *Summa contra gentiles* and the corresponding discussion of *sacra doctrina* in the first article of the *Summa theologiae*, adopts the characteristically Fārābīan-Averroist thesis that many salient features of Scripture serve to aid common believers who cannot understand even those divine truths that are in principle accessible to natural reason. The Bible's extensive use of metaphor and other forms of figurative speech is reduced by Aquinas to a means for ensuring that "even the simple who are unable by themselves to grasp intellectual things may be able to understand" (*ut saltem vel sic rudes eam capiant*).²¹ Moreover, Aquinas explains even the presence of historical narrative in Scripture--surely its predominant mode of discourse--as primarily a means to provide the faithful with moral "examples to be followed in our lives" (*in exemplum vitae*).²²

That Aquinas and Averroes would share a concern for the needs of simple believers is not, on reflection, so hard to fathom, given the prominent religious roles that each man played in his respective community. Yet it is somewhat ironic that on this particular point the position upheld by the *falāsifah* seems to do more justice to the actual character of revealed texts than does the Thomistic account of *sacra doctrina*. Islamic philosophers have no trouble explaining why Scripture is predominantly metaphorical and narrative--its sole function is to communicate to common people. In contrast to Aquinas and his Christian counterparts, for Islamic philosophers there is no further theological science for which revealed texts must provide some analogue of demonstrative first principles.²³

The analogous religious positions held by Aquinas, as a Dominican priest, and Averroes, as a canon lawyer, may also help to explain another unexpected parallel between Aquinas and Averroes. When Aquinas mounts his impassioned attacks on Averroes's Latin followers in the *De unitate intellectus*, he challenges his opponent--presumably Siger of Brabant--to "come out and fight like a man," so to speak: "But if there be anyone boasting of his knowledge, falsely so-called, who wishes to say something against what we have written here, let him not speak in corners, nor in the presence of boys who do not know how to judge about such difficult matters..."²⁴

Aquinas' concerns for the tender Arts students who are not sufficiently mature to understand what is at stake in these debates is uncannily parallel to the deep concern that Averroes expresses in the *Decisive Treatise* for the simple believers whose faith has been undermined by the attacks on philosophy coming from the theologian Ghazālī: "When something of these allegorical interpretations [of Scripture] is expressed to anyone unfit

to receive them ... both he who expresses it and he to whom it is expressed are led into unbelief.”²⁵

Despite their shared “pastoral” concerns for ordinary Christians and Muslims, in the end the gulf which divides Aquinas and Averroes on the relation between reason and revelation is an unbridgeable one, at least where purely doctrinal matters are concerned. There are philosophical possibilities open to Averroes that are blocked to all of his Latin readers, and it is these core philosophical positions that form the battleground between Averroes and the Latin authors indebted to him. So I’d like turn now to the Averroist doctrine that formed the most heated battlefield of them all, namely, the theory of the unicity of the material intellect.

IV. Reason Reflecting on Reason: Averroes on the Material Intellect

In the proemium to the *De unitate intellectus*, Aquinas expresses particular disdain for Averroes and his followers because their error is one that concerns “the very intellect through which we are meant by nature to avoid errors and know the truth” (*circa intellectum erratur, per quem nati sumus deuitatis erroribus cognoscere ueritatem*).²⁶

Although Aquinas claims that his sole aim is to show the irrationality of Averroism from a philosophical perspective, he notes nonetheless that its incompatibility with the Christian faith is obvious, since by definition it undermines personal immortality and the attendant reward and punishment in the afterlife. For Averroes himself, however, the immortality of the soul was never at stake, and he had no underlying theological motivation to seek an account of the human intellect that would support immortality. And

this is of great significance for understanding just how different Averroes's philosophical project was from that of his Latin readers.

In the words of one recent commentator, Averroes was "haunted" by the question of the nature of the human intellect.²⁷ This comes through in the tentative way in which Averroes reaches his conclusion that there is only one material intellect for all humans in the *Long Commentary on the De anima*, but it emerges even more clearly if one follows Averroes's shifting positions on the nature of the intellect in his numerous other commentaries on the *De anima*.²⁸ In his early *Epitome of the De anima*, Averroes upheld a form of Alexandrian "materialism" akin to that promulgated by his Andalusian predecessor Ibn Bājjah (Avempace), according to which the material intellect is simply the disposition of the imagination or the images that it contains to receive intelligible universals.²⁹ At this point in his development, Averroes believes that since the imagination is a psychological faculty whose contents enjoy spiritual or intentional rather than material being, it is able to satisfy Aristotle's basic requirement that the intellect be neither a body nor a power in a body.³⁰ By the time he came to write the *Long Commentary*, Averroes concluded that this view did not sufficiently capture the utter immateriality required for abstract, universal cognition. Instead, the material intellect must be understood to be totally separate from matter. And since matter is the principle of numerical multiplicity within natural species, the intellect cannot be "numbered in virtue of the numbering of individual beings" (*numeratus per numerationem individuorum hominum*), and thus there can be only one intellect for all human beings.³¹

While Averroes's early views on the intellect were unknown in the West, they are useful for understanding two aspects of the West's reception of his later doctrine of unicity. First, they highlight the fact that for Averroes, personal immortality was never an option. The alternatives as Averroes saw them were some form of "materialism" that made the intellect a function of the higher order operations unique to the human imagination, a power localized within the brain; or the positing of a separate intellect as the repository of intelligible forms with which humans would conjoin in order to exercise abstract thinking. Indeed, from the perspective of the individual knower, Averroes's mature and admittedly counter-intuitive teaching on the intellect is not all that different from his early position: as an individual I experience the activities of abstract thinking primarily through the concomitant operations in my imaginative faculty.

Second, within the context of Islamic philosophy, upholding the immortality of the soul would have had little if any salutary effect on the relations between philosophy and theology. When Ghazālī attacked the philosophers as unbelievers, his main target was Avicenna, the only figure amongst the *falāsifah* to uphold personal immortality as a central tenet of his psychology.³² Ghazālī argued in the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* that since bodily resurrection is described extensively in the Qur'ān, interpreting it allegorically would be permitted only if the resurrection of the body could be proven to be *impossible*. The immortality of the soul--even if it allows for some version of reward and punishment--will simply not make the cut as an adequate religious account of the afterlife.³³ Following in the wake of such an attack, Averroes had no reason to view the teaching on soul and intellect contained in Aristotle's *De anima* as a breeding ground for

clashes between philosophy and religion. Unlike the other hotbed issues of the eternity of the world and the denial of divine providence over particulars, the nature of the human intellect posed purely philosophical problems that were surprisingly free of import for the philosopher's interpretation of the Qur'ān.

This crucial point helps to explain why Averroes's approach to the intellect struck such an odd chord with his medieval readers, and continues to do so today. We have become accustomed to viewing Aristotle's *De anima* through the lenses of Western Christian authors, for whom the problem of personal immortality was inseparable from the account of the nature of intellect. Such a focus on the soul's personal survival and accountability in the hereafter in turn leads to the assumption that what is of paramount importance in explaining intellectual cognition is the role of the knowing subject as a centre of conscious awareness. By contrast, as I have tried to show in my own readings of Averroes's psychology, for him the paramount philosophical concern was explaining the constitution of the intelligible object and finding a suitable ontological repository to act as a "place of forms." Averroes was primarily concerned with explaining how and where universals could be constituted as intentional beings, given the close connection between the human soul and the human body--a connection that prevents human souls from conferring complete immateriality on the intentional beings that reside in them. That Averroes does not primarily envisage the separate material intellect as the seat of conscious awareness of such intelligible forms is indicated, as I've tried to argue in many places, by his understanding of how Aristotle's analogy between understanding and vision impact on the material intellect. In applying that analogy--and in particular the

comparison between light and the Agent Intellect--to the material intellect, Averroes nowhere takes the separate material intellect to be the analogue of the seeing eye. Rather, he always likens it to the medium of vision--the air--whose role is to transmit colour to the eye, not to do the seeing itself.³⁴

Whether Averroes thinks that consciousness is just not that interesting (perhaps in reaction to Avicenna's obsession with the topic?), or that it's a primitive concept that cannot be further analyzed, is unclear. It's likely that Averroes thinks of personal consciousness as a function of sensitive soul, an understanding that would be in keeping with many recent readings of Aristotle's likely view on the matter. If that's the case, then once again, he would have no reason to provide a paradigm of intellection that has any bearing at all on worries about personal immortality.³⁵

V. Intellect and Immortality: Reactions to Averroes in the West

In sharp contrast to Averroes himself, for almost all of Averroes's Christian readers--even the most sympathetic--the underlying assumption is always that the immortality and consciousness of individual human souls are the principal stakes in the game. The discussion of the intellect thus has a religious dimension built into it in the West that is utterly foreign to Averroes.

It is certainly the case that Aquinas takes the main religious threat posed by Averroism to be its denial of the immortality of the soul, as is clear from the introduction to the *De unitate intellectus*. It is also clear from Aquinas' more properly philosophical responses to Averroism that he assumes that this threat can be defused by showing that a separate material intellect cannot account for the individual's conscious experience of

thinking. Aquinas assumes that despite its oddity as an explication of that experience, that must still be what Averroes's theory of the intellect is about. This is evident in Aquinas's oft-repeated refrain that Averroes is unable to account for the fact that "this individual human understands" (*hic homo singularis intelligit*). Aquinas continually draws our attention to the fact that the elements of thinking assigned by Averroes to the individual are those through which "something is understood, whereas through the intellectual power one understands something" (*aliquid intelligitur, sed per potentiam intellectiuam aliquid intelligit*).³⁶ His striking comparison of the individual "knower" to a wall is meant to give a vivid and devastating portrayal of the inertness of individuals on the Averroist scheme: "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."³⁷ Nowhere does Aquinas ever take note of the fact that Averroes himself does not liken the material intellect to the seeing eye. It simply does not occur to him that what Averroes is attempting to explain with reference to the material intellect is not the awareness of the object known, for in that case the theory of the intellect would have none of the religious implications that Aquinas thinks are its deepest failings.³⁸

Indeed, even Averroes's most radical defenders in the West seem to accept the Thomistic assumption that the material intellect is meant to be the knowing subject in intellectual cognition. Perhaps the most striking case in this regard is the anonymous

author of a radically Averroist *De anima* commentary, who agrees with Aquinas that on Averroes's account "it seems that we are understood rather than that we understand" (*magis videtur quod nos intelligimur et non intelligimus*).³⁹ This author, thinking himself to be defending Averroes, responds to Aquinas by saying: "So I do not grant that a human being understands, strictly speaking." He even goes so far as to deny that "I experience and perceive myself to understand" ; rather, it is the separate material intellect that "experiences this, just as [it] experiences the objects of the intellect to be in it."⁴⁰ Had Averroes himself encountered such a champion, he might well have wondered, "with friends like these, who needs enemies?" His putative ally, like Aquinas, assumes that for Averroes too the intellect serves principally as the locus of thinking, that is, of the conscious perception and experience of thought.

There is one final, more irenic form of reaction to Averroism in the West that emerges after the 1277 condemnations, when the hysteria surrounding the threats posed to Christian doctrine by pagan and Islamic philosophy seems to have abated somewhat. This reaction is embodied in texts by William of Ockham and John Buridan; here too, however, we seem to be faced with a scene of the "with friends like these" variety. For Ockham and Buridan invoke two purely theological models--the Trinity and the Eucharist--to help understand how someone as astute as Averroes could come to believe a doctrine as apparently implausible as the unicity of the intellect.

Ockham, for example, offers an interpretation of the "conjunction" (*copulatio*) of the Averroist material intellect with the individual that he thinks will allow us to say that individual humans are "understanding and rational."⁴¹ The sort of union that Ockham

envisages allows two or more natures to share their properties with one another while remaining separate. The model in this case is the Trinity, which permits us to say that God suffered and died on the cross “from the nature assumed by the Word.” If the divine nature can simultaneously be in three persons in the Trinity, so Ockham says, it doesn’t seem that absurd for someone like Averroes to think that one intellect can be in three (or more!) humans simultaneously.⁴² Still, Ockham admits that such a possibility is a miraculous one, which is scarcely intelligible even when attributed to the Divine power, let alone when applied to the natural order.⁴³

In his *Commentary on the De anima*, John Buridan invokes another theological doctrine that was also used by Ockham,⁴⁴ the Eucharist, in addressing the Averroist response to the question “Whether the intellectual soul is a form inhering in the body?” Buridan’s response is of special interest since he puts Alexander’s materialist view of the intellect—which, unbeknownst to Buridan, was Averroes’s original stance—on the same side as the Christian faith, as agreeing that the human intellect “is a form inhering in a human body.”⁴⁵ By contrast, for Averroes the relation between the intellect and the body is not one of inherence but of mere presence. Buridan argues that the Alexandrian picture is the most reasonable from the perspective of natural philosophy, though it too is opposed to Christian faith inasmuch as it undermines the soul’s immortality. Buridan makes no effort to resolve these tensions, however, and in a move evocative of Siger’s earlier disclaimers, simply states “our position, based on faith.”⁴⁶

Buridan adds, however, that the Christian, unlike Averroes, has a way to explain the inherence of the indivisible intellect in a divisible body, based upon the model of Christ’s

presence in the Eucharist. If, as Buridan believes, Averroes is worried about such puzzles as how an immaterial intellect can be in two places at once in virtue of the different locations of the parts of its corresponding divisible body,⁴⁷ Buridan argues that he can understand this based on the way that the body of Christ is present simultaneously in heaven and in the Eucharist, even though the body of Christ “is not commensurate with the magnitude of the host, but exists in each and every part of it.”⁴⁸ In the same way, an immaterial intellect is able to inhere in each and every part of the body, even though it does not thereby become extended or moved in virtue of that inherence.⁴⁹

Now there is a key difference between Ockham and Buridan’s attitude to the theological models each evokes, since Ockham presents them from a perspective sympathetic to Averroes, whereas Buridan presents them as responses to Averroism. Still, Buridan’s arguments have the same ultimate effect as Ockham’s: they suggest that Averroes’s account of the relation between the intellect and the individual can be understood on the basis of very same principles used to provide a rational account of the Eucharist. In the end Buridan too acknowledges that “the way in which the intellect inheres in the human body is not natural but supernatural.” Perhaps that is why, like Ockham, he too describes Averroes’s arguments as plausible (*probabilis*).

VI. Conclusion

It is hard to say what Averroes would have thought of these reactions to his teachings in the West. On my reading of what Averroes was up to with his theory of a single, separate intellect, I think he would have agreed that Aquinas and he were simply talking past each other. For him intellect was not supposed to explain the individual’s ability to

experience thinking, but rather, to explain the process by which intelligibles could be conveyed to the individual, the way colours are conveyed through the air.⁵⁰ If you wish to understand the individual experience of thinking, however, you should look to the imagination and the senses, the basic cognitive capacities shared by all conscious, sentient beings.

Still, I don't think Averroes would be surprised that the question of immortality would have been of concern to philosophers who were also theologians--Averroes, like his philosophical predecessors al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājjah, was obsessed with the possibility of attaining a direct cognitive union or conjunction with the Agent Intellect, a doctrine which for Islamic philosophers offered a rationalist version of intellectual blessedness.⁵¹ But to expect such immortality to be personal would have been, in Averroes's eyes, an unfortunate mistake engendered by the West's tendencies to mix two levels of discourse that should be kept apart, the theological and the philosophical.

Perhaps what is most difficult to surmise, however, is how Averroes would have reacted to Ockham and Buridan's well-meaning attempts to make his views seem plausible. Perhaps if one reads them as efforts to keep the peace between philosophy and religion, Averroes might take them in the spirit of his own--somewhat disingenuous--attempts in the *Decisive Treatise* to argue that philosophy and Scripture are not that far apart on controversial issues like the eternity of the world and divine providence.⁵²

But Averroes would surely have been completely befuddled by the claim that his doctrine of the intellect rests upon principles that Christians themselves hold are incomprehensible to unaided natural reason and which must therefore be accepted as true

on the basis of faith alone. According to the Fārābīan framework that Averroes embraced, there are no such principles--all of reality is in principle penetrable by the human mind.

But what about the claims of medieval theologians that a science of theology, understood in Aristotelian terms, is indeed possible, and that philosophy provides a model for an attenuated understanding of doctrines like the Trinity and the Eucharist, in the spirit of faith seeking understanding? Aren't Ockham and Buridan, like Siger before them, suggesting that Averroes's account of the separate material intellect points to the fact that the unity between intellect and body is in fact a philosophical mystery that cannot be fully grasped by reason?

That possibility would, I believe, be the most abhorrent from the perspective of Islamic rationalism. While Averroes does admit that his account of the material intellect pushes the boundaries of natural philosophy to their limits, it points the way not to some form of revealed, supra-rational knowledge, but to the principles of metaphysics as the study of being separate from matter.⁵³ Indeed, it is in the course of his account of the material intellect that Averroes endorses most forcefully the Fārābīan thesis of the completion of philosophy: "For since it is the case that wisdom exists in some way proper to human beings, ... it is thought that it is impossible that the whole habitable world shun philosophy. ... Perhaps, then, philosophy is found in the greater part of the subject in every era."⁵⁴ Where Christian authors looked to personal immortality and the beatific vision for their salvation, Averroes looked to philosophy alone--not only as practiced by the individual philosopher, but even more importantly, as the common property of all rational beings--for a more impersonal source of beatitude.

Notes

¹ Anselm, *Proslogion*, in vol. 1 of *S. Anselmi Opera omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt (1938; reprint Stuttgart-Bad Cannstat: Frommann-Holzboog, 1984), c. 1, 97-100.

² For accounts of the Condemnations see John F Wippel, “The Condemnations of 1270 and 1277 at Paris,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 7 (1977): 169–201; F-X. Putallaz, “Censorship,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. R. Pasnau, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1:99-113; David Piché, *La condamnation parisienne de 1277* (Paris: Vrin, 1999). An English translation of the 1270 Condemnation can be found in *Medieval Philosophy: From St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, ed. John F. Wippel and Allan B. Wolter (New York: Free Press, 1969), 366; for the Condemnations of 1277 see “Condemnation of 219 Propositions,” trans. E. L. Fortin and P. D. O’Neill, in Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, editors, *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), 335-54.

³ Averroes’s manual of Islamic Law is *Bidāyah al-mujtahid wa-nihāyah al-muqtaṣid*, nicely rendered into English as *The Legal Interpreter’s Beginning and the Mediator’s Ending* in C. E. Butterworth, *Averroës: Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), 51 n.1.

⁴ “Monopsychism” is a misnomer because it implies that all human beings share a soul or *psychē* rather than an intellect.

⁵ Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf (Book of Letters)*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1969), Part II, chap. 19, n. 110, 132: “For philosophy in general precedes religion in the same way as the user of tools precedes the tools in time. . . . And religion precedes theology and jurisprudence in the same way as the master employing the servant precedes the servant, and the user of the tool, the tool” (unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own).

⁶ For a study of this taxonomy and its implications for Islamic philosophy, see *my Logic and Aristotle’s “Rhetoric” and “Poetics” in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

⁷ In Part II, chapters 20 to 22 of the *Book of Letters*, Fārābī outlines the progress of civilizations as they develop languages and the “popular” arts based on language. The rise of the syllogistic arts follows upon the perfection of this linguistic stage of development, and it culminates in Aristotle’s discovery of demonstration, which Fārābī discusses it in chapter 23, especially nn. 142-43, 151-152.

⁸ Fārābī, *Book of Letters*, II, 23, nn. 144-45, 152-53.

⁹ Fārābī, *Book of Letters*, II, 19, n.108, 131.

¹⁰ Fārābī, *Book of Letters*, II, 19, n.112, 133.

¹¹ Fārābī, *Book of Letters*, II, 24, n. 147, 153: “Whenever religion follows upon the philosophy which has been perfected after all of the syllogistic arts have been distinguished one from another in the respect and the arrangement which we required, it is a sound religion of the utmost excellence. As for when the philosophy has not yet

become certain and demonstrative, and of the utmost excellence, but rather, whose beliefs are still being verified through rhetorical, dialectical, or sophistical [methods], nothing prevents beliefs occurring in all or much or most of it, which are entirely false, and of [whose falsehood] there is no awareness.”

¹² While there is no reason to believe that either of Avicenna or Averroes rejected the religious pluralism embodied in Fārābī’s recognition of a multitude of virtuous religions, their own writings on religion and politics tend to focus more squarely on its relevance within an Islamic context.

¹³ Averroes, *Faṣl al-Maqāl (The Decisive Treatise)*, translated by G. F. Hourani in *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: Luzac, 1976), 50. For an insightful discussion of Averroes’s appeal to this maxim and its Aristotelian origins, see Richard C. Taylor, “‘Truth Does Not Contradict Truth’: Averroes and the Unity of Truth,” *Topoi* 19 (2000): 3-16.

¹⁴ Fārābī, *Book of Letters*, II, 24, n.153, 157.

¹⁵ See *Decisive Treatise*, chap.2, trans. Hourani, 51-54, for Averroes’s appeals to the lack of consensus on the matters which Ghazālī accuses the philosophers of holding heretical beliefs.

¹⁶ In the *Decisive Treatise*, Averroes emphasizes the superiority of logic as a means for determining the truth, and he explicitly appeals to the Fārābīan thesis that the logician, who alone is master of the demonstrative method, is the one who understands the

different levels of discourse appropriate to different audiences. See, for example, *Decisive Treatise*, trans. Hourani, 45-49; 53-54; 58-60; 63-65.

¹⁷ For Averroes's criticism of Ghazālī on this score, see the text cited below at n. 25.

¹⁸ Of course, even referring to Western authors as “philosophers” highlights this point: whereas *kalām* (theology) and *falsafah* (philosophy) were two distinct and rival intellectual traditions in medieval Islam, all the Christian authors whom we now study as medieval “philosophers” were actually theologians, although a case could be made for an emerging philosophical class in those who remained Arts Masters for their entire careers, such as Siger of Brabant and John Buridan.

¹⁹ “Condemnation of 219 Propositions,” 337.

²⁰ Siger of Brabant, *De anima intellectiva (On the Intellective Soul)*, in *Quaestiones in tertium De anima; De anima intellectiva; De aeternitate mundi*, ed. Bernardo Bazán, *Philosophes médiévaux*, 13 (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1972), c. 7, 108; English translation by J. A. Arnold and J. F. Wippel in *Medieval Philosophy: From St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, ed. J. F. Wippel and A. B. Wolter (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1969), 365. Similar disclaimers are found in the closely related discussion in chap. 3, which considers how the intellective soul is the form of the body. See, for example, 88: “We say that the Philosopher held this concerning the union of the intellective soul to the body—preferring, however, the belief of the holy catholic faith, if the Philosopher’s opinions are contrary to this, as we do in all other matters whatsoever.” Cf. also 83-84: “For we are seeking here only the intention of the philosophers, and

especially of Aristotle, even though the Philosopher may perhaps have thought differently from the truth and the wisdom concerning the soul which have been handed down through revelation, and which cannot be concluded through natural reasonings. But nothing of the miracles of God [is pertinent] to us at this time, since we are examining natural things in by the method of natural philosophy.”

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (Ottawa: Collège Dominicain, 1941-45), 1a, q. 1, a. 9; English translation by A. C. Pegis, *The Basic Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1945), 1: 15.

²² Aquinas, *ST* 1a, q. 1, a. 2 ad 2m; trans. Pegis, 1:7. Cf. *SCG* Bk. 1, chaps. 3-4.

²³ That is, the Islamic philosophers would not have accepted the possibility of a demonstrative science like *sacra doctrina* as proposed by Aquinas in *ST* 1a, q. 1, a. 1-3; nor would they have accepted the idea of revealed truths that exceed the bounds of reason, belief in which Aquinas defends in *SCG* Bk. 1, chaps. 5-9.

²⁴ Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, in vol. 43, 291-314 of *Opera omnia*, ed. H.-F. Dondaine (Rome: San Tommaso, 1976), c. 5, 314: *Si quis autem gloriabundus de falsi nominis scientia uelit contra hec que scripsimus aliquid dicere, non loquatur in angulis nec coram pueris qui nesciunt de tam arduis iudicare*; English translation by Beatrice Zedler, *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists* (Milwaukee; Marquette University Press, 1968), 75, n. 125.

²⁵ Averroes, *Decisive Treatise*, trans. Hourani, 66. A bit later Averroes repeats the point: “As for the man who expresses these allegories to unqualified persons, he is an

unbeliever on account of his summoning people to unbelief.” For some interesting reflections on the reactions that the Latin Averroists might have provoked from Averroes himself, given the political ramifications of their teachings, see Alfred Ivry, “Averroes and the West: The First Encounter/Nonencounter,” in *A Straight Path. Studies in Philosophy and Culture in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, ed. Ruth Link-Salinger et al. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988, 142-158. The case of Siger might be complicated from Averroes’s perspective, since unlike Ghazālī, Siger was not promulgating philosophical teachings publicly to “the masses,” but to arts students at the most prestigious university in Europe at the time. The question is whether the young age of medieval arts students would be sufficient to make their mental fragility on a par with that of simple believers--as Aquinas applies in his attack on Siger cited at n. 24 above. If we assume that arts students are proto-philosophers who have already shown some intellectual ability, Averroes might think that Aquinas’s outrage is misplaced.

²⁶ Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 1, 291, trans. Zedler, 21, n. 1. Aquinas makes an even more pointed version of this criticism later in the text: “Therefore, those who wish to defend this position should either admit that they themselves know nothing and are unfitted to be opponents of other debaters...” (*Qui ergo hanc positionem defendere uolunt, aut confiteantur se nichil intelligere et indignos esse cum quibus aliqui disuptent*; chap. 3, 306; trans., Zedler 56, n. 79). That is, an Averroist has to admit that on his own principles he has no individual intellect, and thus should not be engaged in intellectual disputes! Cf. also this remark, which follows directly on Aquinas’s argument based on

the problem of accounting for the truism, *hic homo singularis intelligit*: “for we would never raise a question about the intellect unless we understood” (*numquam enim de intellectu quereremus nisi intelligimus*; chap. 3, 303; trans. Zedler, 48, n. 62).

²⁷ See H. A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 258.

²⁸ For an overview of the evolution of Averroes’s views, see Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*, 258–314. There is some dispute amongst Averroes scholars regarding the chronological relations amongst his various works relating to Aristotle’s *De anima*. For a defense of the traditional the view that the *Long Commentary* represents the latest thinking of Averroes on the intellect, see H. A. Davidson, “The Relation between Averroes’s Middle and Long Commentaries on the *De Anima*,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 7 (1997): 139–51; for the view that the *Middle Commentary* is later than the *Long Commentary*, see A. Ivry, “Averroes’s Three Commentaries on *De Anima*,” in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition*, ed. G. Endress and J. A. Aertsen (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 199–216.

²⁹ Averroes, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-naḥs (Epitome of the De anima)*, ed. F. Al-Ahwani (Cairo, Maktabah al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1950), 86: “Therefore, the disposition which is in the imaginative forms for receiving the intelligibles is the first material intellect.”

³⁰ Averroes, *Epitome of the De anima*, 86: “And we say that since it has been shown that these intelligibles are generated, therefore it is necessary that a disposition precede them.

And since a disposition is something which is not separate, it follows that it is found in a subject. And it is not possible that this subject be a body, inasmuch as it has been shown that these intelligibles are not material in the way that corporeal forms are material. And it is also not possible that it be an intellect, since what is in potency is some thing, but which does not have in itself anything in actuality of that for which it is a potency. And since this is the case, the subject for this disposition is necessarily a soul. And there nothing closer to being a subject for these intelligibles which is here evident among the powers of the soul, other than the imaginative forms, since it has been shown that [the intelligibles] are only found conjoined to them, and that they exist through their existence and are destroyed through their destruction.”

³¹ Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. S. Crawford, (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), Bk. 3, comm. 5, 402; English translation by Richard C. Taylor, *Long Commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 317. This is just one of the many places where this phrase or variations on it occurs in the *Long Commentary*.

³² For Avicenna’s arguments for immortality, see *Al-Shifā’ : Al-Nafs (Healing: The Soul)*, ed. F. Rahman, *Avicenna’s De anima, Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifā’* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); Bk. 5, chaps. 2-4, 209-234; medieval Latin version in *Avicenna Latinus: Liber de anima, seu sextus de naturalibus*, ed. S. Van Riet, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1968); partial English translation in, *Classical Arabic*

Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources, ed. and trans. Jon McGinnis and David Reisman (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), 188-99. An English translation of the corresponding chapters of Avicenna's *Al-Najāh (Deliverance)* is found in F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), chaps. 10-14, 50-64.

³³ While Avicenna rejects the resurrection of the body, he does make some effort to offer an account of how an immaterial soul might experience corporeal desires in the afterlife. For an excellent discussion of this aspect of Avicenna's eschatology see Jean Michot, *La destinée de l'homme selon Avicenne* (Louvain: Peeters, 1986). Still, it might be argued that it is Avicenna's very dualism that makes his position vulnerable to Ghazālī's attacks with respect to bodily resurrection. For most of Ghazālī's critiques of Avicenna's denial of bodily resurrection turn on the fact that Avicenna's account of the soul-body relation makes the body merely incidental to personal identity--what I am is my rational soul, not my body, nor even the composite of my soul and body. If that's the case, Ghazālī argues, then even if it were impossible for God to reunite my soul with something that is numerically identical with my former body, Avicenna should have no problem with a doctrine of bodily resurrection that involves my receiving a *replica* of my former body, since I would remain the same person on account of my soul. See Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-Falāsifah)*, ed. and trans. M. E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997; rev. 2000), Discussion 20, 212-229. For Averroes, however, the problems raised by the preservation of the individual's material continuity cannot be resolved by any appeal to a subsistent individual soul:

Averroes can only assert that bodily resurrection is entirely *impossible*, and must be understood as a political tool to ensure fear of eternal punishment among the masses for any severe ethical misconduct.

³⁴ For my earlier efforts to defend Averroes on these points, see “Consciousness and Self-Knowledge in Aquinas’s Critique of Averroes’s Psychology,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 23-59; and “Models of the Mind: Metaphysical Presuppositions of the Averroist and Thomistic Accounts of Intellection,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004): 319-52.

³⁵ I argue for this claim in “Consciousness and Self-Knowledge,” 379-85.

³⁶ *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 3, 303; trans. Zedler 50, n. 66.

³⁷ Aquinas, *ST* 1a, q. 76, a.1: *Patet autem quod ex hoc quod colores sunt in pariete, visus non attribuitur parieti; non enim dicimus quod paries videat, sed magis phantasmatum sunt in intellectu possibili, non sequitur quod Socrates, in quo sunt phantasmata, intelligat; sed quod ipse, vel eius phantasmata intelligantur.*

³⁸ Aquinas is aware of the analogy that Averroes draws between the medium and the material intellect, as is clear from his remarks *Summa contra Gentiles*, 2, chap. 60, n. 23, but he limits its relevance to accounting for the ability of the material intellect to know other separate substances: *Intellectus enim possibilis, secundum quod est in se subsistens, intelligit substantias separatas: et est in potentia ad eas sicut diaphanum ad lucem.*

³⁹ Anonymous, “Un commentaire averroïste sur les livres I et II du *Traité de l’ame* d’Aristote,” ed. M. Giele, in *Trois commentaires anonymes sur le Traité de l’ame*

d' Aristote (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1971), 21-95, Bk. 2, q. 4, 73, n. 3;
 English translation by R. Pasnau in *The Cambridge Translations of Medieval
 Philosophical Texts Volume Three: Mind and Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge
 University Press, 2002), 63.

⁴⁰ Anonymous, ed. Giele, Bk. 2, q. 4, 75, 76; trans. Pasnau, 66: *Unde, quod homo proprie
 intelligit, nec hoc probant; and Tu dices: ego experior et percipio me intelliger, dico
 fasum est ... imo intellectus egens tuo corpore ut obiecto experitur hoc.*

⁴¹ William of Ockham, *De intellectu possibili secundum Averroem, Quaestiones variae*,
 ed. G. I. Etzkorn, F. E. Kelly, Joseph Wey, vol. 8 of *Opera theologica* (St. Bonaventure,
 NY: St. Bonaventure University, 1984), q. 6, art. 7, 239: *Et propter istam unionem potest
 homo sufficienter dici intelligens [et] rationalis.* Ockham also takes up the Averroist
 account of the unicity of the intellect in qq. 10 and 11 of his first *Quodlibet*. See
Quodlibeta septem, ed. Joseph Wey, vol. 9 of *Opera theologica* (St. Bonaventure, NY:
 St. Bonaventure University, 1980), 62-68. Here too he rejects Averroes's view in the end,
 though he denies that one can *demonstrate* that the soul is the form of the body, and he
 also concedes that it's difficult to prove that the intellect could not merely be a mover of
 the body.

⁴² Ockham, *De intellectu possibili, Oth 8: 239-40.*

⁴³ Ockham, *De intellectu possibili, Oth 8: 241: Sed quod hoc ponatur de subiecto et
 accidente est maximum miraculum et vix intelligibile posse fieri per potentiam Dei.* This

statement is made with reference to the second theological parallel that Ockham provides, that of the presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist. See n. 44 below.

⁴⁴ See Ockham, *De intellectu possibili*, Oth 8: 240-41. Here Ockham argues that the Eucharist can provide a model for Averroes's account of how individual acts of understanding can vary from one individual to the next in virtue of the intellect's dependence on phantasms, even though the single material intellect belongs equally to all humans. The Eucharist, Ockham declares, illustrates how it is possible for a "subject to be somewhere that its accident is not" (*quod subiectum potest esse alicubi ubi suum accidens non est*).

⁴⁵ John Buridan, *Questions on Aristotle's De anima*, ed. Jack Zupko, in *John Buridan's Philosophy of Mind: An Edition and Translation of Book III of His "Questions on Aristotle's De anima"*, 2 vols. Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1989, q. 4, 1: 29-38; English trans. reprinted in *Medieval Philosophy: "Essential Readings with Commentary"*, ed. G. Klima, F. Allhoff, and A. J. Vaidya (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 219-223. See especially 29: *Quaeritur quarto utrum intellectus humanus sit forma inhaerens corpori humano. Arguitur quod sic, auctoritate Alexandri et fidei catholicae. Oppositum arguitur auctoritate Commentatoris*.

⁴⁶ Buridan, *Questions on De anima*, q. 4, 1: 34: *Nos autem fide ponimus...*" (Klima, 221).

⁴⁷ Buridan, *Questions on De anima*, q. 4, 1: 30-31 (Klima, 219-20), lists a number of puzzles that are supposed to follow from assuming that the soul inheres in the body as its

form. I don't think there is any evidence that this is Averroes's worry, but Latin Averroists and critics of Averroes in the West assumed this from very early on. The assumption is based on Averroes's allusions to the relationship between the celestial intellects and the bodies they move, which Averroes often invokes to show that something separate cannot be multiplied. But since he forestalls the possibility of an individuated intellect from the outset, he doesn't actually worry about the incompatibility between divisibility and immateriality. See Averroes, *Long Commentary on De anima*, Bk. 3, comm. 5, 403-404; Taylor, 318-19.

⁴⁸ Buridan, *Questions on De anima*, q. 4, 1: 36; Klima, 222: *non enim corpus Christi in hostia super altari commensuratur magnitudine hostiae, sed est in qualibet parte hostiae.*

⁴⁹ The analogy with the Eucharist is invoked by Buridan in the *Questions on De anima*, q. 4, 1: 35-36, *ad primam instantiam* and *ad secundum instantiam* (Klima, 222).

⁵⁰ I explore the ramifications of Averroes's analogy between the visual medium and the material intellect in "Models of the Mind."

⁵¹ For discussions of conjunction in Averroes and his predecessors, see my "Conjunction and the Identity of Knower and Known in Averroes," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 73(1999): 159-184; and A. Ivry, "Averroes on Intellection and Conjunction," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 86 (1966): 76-85

⁵² Averroes, *Decisive Treatise*, trans. Hourani, 54-57. On the question of the eternity of the world, Averroes claims that since both the theologians and the philosophers agree that there are "three classes of beings: two extremes and one intermediate between the

extremes,” their disagreement reduces to a simple dispute over how to conceive the intermediate class. That is, the two extremes are God himself and individual particulars in the world, which are agreed to be eternal and generated respectively. The intermediate entity is the world taken as a whole, and the disagreement is simply over whether it is eternal *in the past*.

⁵³ For the dependence of metaphysics on psychology see Averroes, *Long Commentary on De anima*, Bk. 3, comm. 5, 410-11; Taylor, 326-27: “To this extent knowledge of the soul is necessary for knowledge of First Philosophy” (*Et ideo scire de anima necessarium est in sciendo Primam Philosophiam*). For a fuller consideration of this point see Richard C. Taylor, “Averroes on Psychology and the Principles of Metaphysics,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36 (1998): 507–523.

⁵⁴ Averroes, *Long Commentary on De anima*, Bk. 3, comm. 5, 408; Taylor, 324: *Quoniam, cum sapientiam esse in aliquo modo proprio hominum est... existimatur quod impossibile est ut tota habitatio fugiat a Philosophia. ... Forte igitur Philosophia invenitur in maiori parte subiecti in omni tempore*. On this claim and its relation to Averroes’s treatment of the possibility of conjunction with the Agent Intellect, see my “Conjunction and the Identity of Knower and Known in Averroes,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 73 (1999): 159-184.