

Averroes' Doctrine of the Mind

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AVERROES' DOCTRINE OF THE MIND

▼ N THESE days of division and armed conflict, when the human family is locked in a deadly fratricidal combat, it is natural for us to search for principles of unification and concord. The present paper attempts to emphasize and support this trend by offering for contemplation one of the great philosophical visions which point toward unity: Averroes' doctrine of the Mind. It is hoped that this doctrine, approached from the point of view of our present need, will attract not only an historical and speculative but a contemporary and practical interest also.

Averroism, a movement which can claim a history of four centuries (from around 1200 up to beyond 1600), is Aristotelian in origin. Its doctrine of the Mind is the fruit of centuries of commentatorial work on certain passages of Aristotle's De Anima. In this epoch-making treatise, Aristotle, denoting the rational manifestation of the human soul, uses the term vous, translated by the Latins as intellectus or mens, the latter being the etymological root of our English Mind. The Arabian term ('Aqal) used by Averroes and its Hebrew equivalent 550 (Sekel) are words closely expressing Aristotle's conception of the mind, defined by him in this manner: "I call Nous that whereby the soul understands and apprehends."1

This Mind considered as a mere potentiality of thought is called by Aristotle γοῦς παθητικός, passive intellect; considered as the act of thinking, it is called νοῦς ποιητικός,2 active intellect. The active intellect builds and organizes conceptual forms; the passive intellect receives such forms. The passive intellect, although definitely distinguished from the sensitive part of the soul, perishes with the body. The active intellect, on the other hand, preexists,3 enters the body from the outside, and is the Divine in man.4 "This Nous". says Aristotle, "is separate, impassive, unmixed, being by its essen-

¹ Λέγω δὲ νοῦν ῷ διανοεῖται καὶ ὑπολαμβάνει ἡ ψυχή, Arist., De Anim.,

III, 4, 429a, 23.

This phrase was used for the first time by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his De Anima, 88,24. See Überweg, Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie

I 387.

* Ποοϋπάρχειν, Arist. De Gen. Anim. II, 3, 736a, 31. See Zeller, Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics, 96-100.

* Λείπεται δὲ τὸν νοῦν μόνον θύραθεν έπεισιέναι καὶ θεῖον εἶναι μόνον. Arist. De Gen. Anim. B 3, 736b27f. See Überweg, op. cit., I, 387.

tial nature an energizing force, for action is always higher than passion and causal force higher than matter. And this alone is immortal and eternal; the passive Nous, on the other hand, is perishable."5

The unfinished and sketchy character of these weighty statements of Aristotle gave rise through the ages to unending speculations and to the most divergent interpretations. Pantheistic and theistic, naturalistic and spiritualistic, theories were derived from them. Enormous mental efforts were spent to reconcile the apparent contradictions of the De Anima and to fill the gaps in the treatment given to the problem.6 In spite of, or perhaps owing to, this incompleteness of Aristotle's inquiry, the problem he had raised regarding the nature of the Mind became one of the most widely discussed questions of the Middle Ages.

Among the many who were attracted by these unfinished parts of the De Anima, Averroes ranks as probably the most famous. This remarkable Arabian thinker, the "Commentator" of Aristotle par excellence, gave an interpretation to the much discussed subject which is momentous both in its implications and in its historical echoes.7

 6 Οὖτος δ νοῦς χωριστὸς καὶ ἀπαθής καὶ ἀμιγὴς, τῆ οῦσία ἄν ἐνέργεια, ἀεὶ γὰρ τιμιώτερον τὸ ποιοῦν τοῦ πάσχοντος καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς ὕλης . . . καὶ τοῦτο μόνον ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀΐδιον . . . ὁ δέ παθητικὸς νοῦς φθαρτός. Arist. De

*Anima, III 5, 430a17.

*Averroes bewails the scantiness of Aristotle's remarks to this point in the following words: "Causa autem istius ambiguitatis et laboris est, quia nullum sermonem ab Aristotele invenimus in hac intentione; sed tamen Aristoteles promisit declarare hoc." Averr. De Anima, III, comm. 36, p.

329. Saint Thomas also complains: "Hanc questionem Aristoteles promisit se determinaturum in tertio de Anima, licet non inveniatur determinata ab ipso in libris qui ad nos pervenerunt." St. Thomas, *Parva naturalia* de motibus animalium, lib. L, tr. I, cap. 4. See Munk, *Mélanges de philo. juive et arabe* (Paris, 1859) 448.

To reconstruct Averroes' doctrine of the Mind, the writer consulted the following original sources:

following original sources:

First, the work called Destructiones Destructionum, Averroes' answer to First, the work called Destructiones Destructionum, Averroes' answer to Algazzali's Tahafut al Falasifa, meaning, The Destruction of the Philosophers. The study of this work was made possible by the kindness of the Hoose Library of Philosophy of the University of Southern California, which owns a rare incunabulum of the same, printed in Venice, 1497.

Second, the Commentarius of Averroes to Aristotle's De Anima, printed in Venice, 1496. This work is included in the above mentioned volume, owned by the University of Southern California.

Third, the Maamár Efshorut Hádvekut o Maámar Haszéchel Hahajulóni, i.e. Treatises on the Possibility of Conjunction or Treatise on the Material Intellect (to be quoted in these pages as "Treatise") in the Hebrew transla-

Averroes in working out his doctrine of the Mind reaches his own conclusions by frequently alluding to the views of earlier commentators, especially to those of Alexander of Aphrodisias (flourished ca. 200 A.D.) and Themistius (ca. 320-ca. 390). Since the Commentator himself favored this method, a presentation of his doctrine cannot go wrong by following him on his own path.

Alexander of Aphrodisias, influential writer of the Peripatetic School, introduced in his investigations a new terminology by using for the name passive intellect the new term of material intellect, νοῦς ὑλικός,8 a term chosen because of the potentiality inherent in this intellect to receive the intelligible forms. This passive, material, also called potential intellect, your durance, is according to Alexander nothing but an ἐπιτηδειότης, a preparedness or disposition of the sensitive level of the soul, and consists in a peculiar composition of the elements of the body. Averroes describes this view in the following manner: "According to Alexander potential intellect is a preparedness proper to the human complexity . . . prior absolutely to the active intellect." "It is a faculty which arises from a mixture of the bodily parts and results in a preparedness to receive the intellect which is actual."10 This "preparedness" in Alexander's view is not an entity, and should be compared not to the blank tablet of Aristotle but rather to the absence of inscription on the tablet.11 It may be compared

tion of an anonymous writer from the Arabic, published, translated into German, and interpreted, by Ludwig Hannes, Halle, C. A. Kaemmerer and Co. 1892.

There are two more treatises of Averroes with reference to the subject of the Mind: *Epistola* de connectione intellectus abstracti cum homine; and the *De animae beatitudine*. Neither of the two were accessible to the writer.

⁸ Haséchel hachomrí. ⁹ "Potest enim intelligi secundum Alexandrum quod intendebat [Aristoteles] per intellectum in potentia preparationem existentem in complexione humana . . . prior tempore intellectu agente simpliciter." *De Anima*, III, comm. 20 p. 325.

Fourth, the Sholshá Maamarím or Three Treatises, on the Conjunction of the Separate Intellect with man (the third from Averroes' son). This text was translated from the Arabic into the Hebrew by Samuel Ibn Tibbon and retranslated in the German with explanations by Dr. J. Hercz, H. S. Herman, 1869.

comm. 20, p. 325.

10 "Et dixit [Alexander] etiam in tractatu . . . quod intellectus materialis . . . est virtus facta a mixtione quae cecidit in corporibus, et preparata ad recipiendum intellectum qui est in actu, et ista opinio in substantia intellectus materialis maxime distat a verbis Aristotelis." De Anima, III, comm. 5, p. 320.

11 Επιτηδειότης τις ἄρα μόνον ἐστὶν ὁ ὑλικός νοῦς πρὸς τὴν τῶν εἰδῶν

to the ability to walk, latent in a new-born infant. 12 Since, now, Alexander conceived the material intellect as a mere "carentia",18 or "lack", a frontal quality capable of emerging quite in the sense of Samuel Alexander's conception of "deity", he sealed its fate as perishable according to the adage that "nothing that originates can be eternal".14 It is not surprising, therefore, that Alexander denies the immortality of the individual Nous.15

The material intellect according to the teaching of the De Anima is the substratum upon which the active intellect produces conceptual thought. Aristotle in that treatise used such cryptic words to characterize the active intellect that, as Zeller says, "Alexander of Aphrodisias had excellent cause to seek for the Active Reason in the Divine Spirit rather than in a part of the human soul."16 From the ambiguous words θύραθεν and θείον, Alexander had to take only a step to come to an identification of the active intellect with the Deity. To quote him: "The active intellect is called a being coming from without, not a part or a force of our own soul, but something in us which originates externally."17 This something, according to his view, is the πρῶτον αἴτιον, the "first cause". 18 That Alexander's interpretation of the words of Aristotle did not remain an isolated doctrine is a well known fact. We can trace it in the Middle Ages especially in the writings of Roger Bacon,19 Robert of Lincoln, William of Auvergne, Adam de Marisco, and others.20

Alexander's conception of the Mind had an early opponent in the

19 "Intellectus agens secundum maiores philosophos non est pars animae sed est substantia alia et separata per essentiam ab intellectu possibili." Opus maius, III 47.

²⁰ See Maurice de Wulf, History of Medieval Philosophy II 141.

ὑποδοχὴν ἐοικὸς πινακίδι ἀγράφφ, μᾶλλον δὲ τῷ τῆς πινακίδος ἀγράφφ, ἀλλ' οὐ τῆ πινακίδι αὐτῆ. Alexander, De Anima, 84, 24; see Hannes, op. cit., p. 7.

12 "Quemadmodum potentia ambulandi, quam homo habet in nativitate, venit ad actum post tempus." Averroes, De Anima, III, comm. 36, 329.

13 "Ipsa vero inscriptionis carentia, fere intellectus materialis est." De Anima 250-51. See Hercz, op. cit. 19.

14 "An existent which originated cannot be eternal, as Abunazar (Alfarabi) said." Three Treatises 27. See Hercz, op. cit. 27.

15 "Et fecit Alexander opinari intellectum materialem esse generabilem et corruptibilem." De Anima, III, 325-26.

10 Zeller, Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics, II 99.

17 Θύραθέν ἐστι λεγόμενος νοῦς ὁ ποιητικός, οὐκ ἀν μόριον καὶ δύναμίς τις τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς, ἀλλ' ἔξωθεν γυνόμενος ἐν ἡμῖν. Alex. De Anima, 108, 22f. See Überweg, Grundriss, I, p. 565.

18 Alex. De Anima 89, 18. See Überweg, op. cit. I 565.

19 "Intellectus agens secundum maiores philosophos non est pars animae

person of Themistius, the other commentator with whom Averroes takes issue in his investigations.

According to Themistius the material intellect has nothing in common with the body and the sensitive faculties of the soul. It is a potentiality of our own spiritual life-principle, a potentiality which when actualized is called the active intellect. The active intellect, in this view, is not an extraneous ingredient in the soul, but is identical with our soul.21 This doctrine more successfully unifies our internal life by reducing both the active and the passive intellect to the same spiritual substance, the individual soul. "The active intellect", as Averroes interprets this conception, "primarily continues with us only in contact with the material intellect. . . . According to this view, then, the active and the passive and the resultant (the intellect in action) are one and the same."22 For that reason, in the view of Themistius both the material and active intellect are immortal. How closely this doctrine resembles that of the Angelic Doctor²³ and of the Scholastics in general, is apparent.

In Averroes' interpretation, the conception of the Nous gains a remarkable subtilty, refinement and richness of content. The "Illustrious Kadi",24 first, emphatically rejects Alexander's doctrine of the material intellect as a mere bodily "preparedness". "The conclusion of Alexander", he says, "that the material intellect, being a mere potentiality and aptitude [of the body], originates and perishes, is—by my life—not true."25 "To say", he continues, "that the material intellect is similar to the preparedness which is in the tablet, not to the tablet in so far as it is prepared . . . , is false."26 A mere "carentia", "lack", would be only a privation and would not have any nature of its own but the nature of its

²¹ "Et ideo opinatus est Themistius quod nos sumus intellectus agens et quod intellectus speculativus nihil est aliud nisi continuatio intellectus agentis cum intellectu materiali tantum, et non est sicut existimavit." De Anima,

cum intellectu materiali tantum, et non est sicut existimavit." De Amma, III, comm. 5, p. 321.

22 "Themistius autem opinatur . . . quod intellectus agens non est innatus continuari nobiscum in primo nisi secundum quod tangit intellectum materialem . . . Secundum igitur hanc opinionem agens et patiens et factum erunt idem." De Amma, III, pp. 325-326.

23 Saint Thomas Aquinas treats this problem under the following quaestio of his Summa: "Utrum intellectus agens sit aliquid animae" (I.q.79, a.4), and comes to the following conclusion: "Respondeo dicendum quod intellectus agens de quo Philosophus loquitur, est aliquid animae."

24 In the Arabic: "Al-Qádí al Ahadu'l-Ahadin." Three Treatises, pp. 22-23.

25 Three Treatises, pp. 22-23.

26 "Dicere autem quod intellectus materialis est similis praeparationi, quae

lacking subject.²⁷ Assuming that the material intellect is nothing but a preparedness, the nature of this preparedness, evidently, could not be a mere general disposition but must have a specific nature of its own.28 For every preparedness alludes to a certain thing to be prepared.²⁹ In order to understand a preparedness, one must know the nature of the thing to be prepared.30 But it is precisely here that Alexander betrays the weakness of his reasoning. He attempts to describe a preparedness without knowing the nature of the subject to be prepared, a thing which is evidently impossible.31

At no other time does Averroes show more animosity than in his opposition to the naturalistic interpretations of Alexander and his followers, such as Alfarabi (d. 950) and others. Heatedly he exclaims: "Oh Alexander! do you think that Aristotle intended to present the nature of a preparedness only, not the nature of the thing prepared? I am ashamed of this discourse and this wonderful exposition."32 The true Aristotelian doctrine in Averroes' view is that the material intellect is "not a body, nor a form in the body, and since it is not a body nor a power of the body, neither can it be a form of imagination", 33 as taught by Avempace34 (d. 1138) and Abubacer³⁵ (ca. 1100-1185). Such a view is absurd

est in tabula, non tabulae secundum quod est praeparata . . . falsum est." De Anima, III, comm. 14, p. 324.

"Praeparatio enim est privatio aliqua et nullam habet naturam propriam nisi propter naturam subiecti." De Anima, III, comm. 14, p. 324.

"Et intendebat per illos sermones demonstrare naturam praeparationis simpliciter tura illud non est proprium intellectui et comp bea est per est proprium intellectui et comp bea est proprium intellectui et comp beau est proprium intellectui et comp est proprium est propriu

simpliciter, tunc illud non est proprium intellectui et omne hoc est perturbatio." De Anima, III, comm. 14, p. 324.

29 "Praeparatio nam ostendit praeparatum." De Anima, III, comm. 14, p.

<sup>324.
30 &</sup>quot;Oportet necessario per cognitionem naturae praeparationis scire naturam praeparati." De Anima, III, comm. 14, p. 324.
31 "Naturam autem praeparationis propriae in intellectu impossibile est demonstrari sine natura subiecti." De Anima, III, comm. 14, p. 324.
32 "O Alexander, reputas Aristotelem intendere demonstrare nobis naturam praeparationis tantum, non naturam praeparati . . . Ego autem verecundor ex hoc sermone et ex hac mirabili expositione." De Anima, III, comm. 14,

p. 324.

33 "Unde Aristoteles . . . iudicavit precise quod natura subiecta ei [praeparationi] differt ab aliis naturis praeparatis . . . unde necesse fuit ipsum
[intellectum] non esse corpus, neque formam in corpore, et cum non fuerit

intellectum forma imaginationis." De corpus, neque virtus in corpore, non erit etiam forma imaginationis." De

Anima, III, comm. p. 324.

""Abubacher autem et Avempace videntur intendere . . . quod intellectus materialis est virtus imaginativa." De Anima, III, comm. 5, p. 320. 35 Ibidem.

since "from the substance of the elements and from their nature a power which distinguishes and comprehends cannot originate". 36 According to true Aristotelian doctrine the material intellect is not a preparedness (ἐπιτηδειότης) or a mere privation (στέρησις) but a potentiality³⁷ (δύναμις) of the rational soul which, while it is not an actual thing (ἐνέργεια, actus actuans, or ἐντελέχεια, actus actuatus), is something truly existenial.

So certain is Averroes about the truth of his interpretation that he is willing to risk the statement that "should this [doctrine] be not the opinion of Aristotle, it would have had to be accepted just the same as the true opinion", 38 an utterance which in the light of Averroes' worshipful admiration of the Stagyrite sounds almost unauthentic.39

In explaining how this material intellect is introduced into the body. Averroes makes an important distinction between the passive and the material intellect.40 The so called passive intellect, properly speaking, is nothing else but the power of imagination,41 a disposition of the body to be affected by the active intellect. As such, it is proper to the individual, and, because it resides in the body, perishes with the individual body. When the active intellect joins this bodily disposition, the mere passive intellect becomes the material intellect, the power of imagination puts on the aspect of a potentiality of conceptual thought.42 Yet this new being is abso-

bilitatis." De Anima, III, comm. 5, p. 320.

**Et si istud non esset opinio Aristotelis, oporteret opinari eam esse opinionem veram." De Anima, III, comm. 14, p. 324.

**The following may illustrate Averroes' unlimited devotion toward his

master:

"Credo namque quod iste homo fuerit regula in natura et exemplar quod natura invenit ad demonstrandum ultimam perfectionem humanam in materiis." "For I believe that this man was set up by nature as a standard and exemplar to present the ultimate human perfection in material things." De

exemplar to present the ultimate human perfection in material things." De Anima, III, comm. 14, p. 324.

*0 "Nam dixit [Aristoteles] de hoc intellectu materiali quod non est passivus, sed immistus" (i.e. with the active intellect). Averr. Epistola de connectione intellectus abstracti cum homine. See Three Treatises, p. 24.

*1 "Intellectus autem passivus est corruptibilis et absque hoc nihil intelligit et intendit [Aristoteles] per intellectum passivum virtutem imaginativam." De Anima, III, comm. 5, p. 322.

*2 "L'intellect en puissance est une chose composée de la disposition qui existe en nous et d'un intellect qui se joint à cette disposition, et qui, en tant qu'il y est joint, est un intellect prédisposé (en puissance) et non pas un intellect en acte en tant qu'il n'est plus joint à la disposition." Munk, Mélanges, p. 447. See Überweg, op. cit., II, 318.

³⁶ "A substantia namque elementorum et a natura eorum non potest fieri virtus distinguens aut comprehensiva." *De Anima*, III, comm. 5, p. 320.

⁸⁷ "Intellectus materialis nullam habet naturam . . . nisi naturam possi-

lutely pure and independent from the body, since it has the identical substance with the active intellect, and, for that reason, it shares in its immortality.

If Averroes in his conception of the material intellect leans toward the view of Themistius, in his doctrine of the active intellect he is influenced by Alexander of Aphrodisias.⁴³ Rejecting Themistius' identification of the active intellect with the individual soul,⁴⁴ he teaches that the active intellect in us is the presence of a separate intellect which emanates from the Intelligence of the lowest sphere, that is, of the sphere of the Moon.⁴⁵ Averroes considers both this active and the material intellect as one and the same in every human individual.⁴⁶

Using Averroes' elucidation that the universal Nous in its outpouring into men resembles the sunlight which, though broken up by the manifold of reflecting bodies, yet, after the removal of bodies is one again,⁴⁷ we may elaborate his metaphor in the following manner.

Our bodies are like dewdrops, varying in size and shape. The quantitative differences of the glassy surfaces, observable on the dewdrops, may be compared to the passive intellect, that is, to our

⁴³ "Et nos convenimus cum Alexandro in modo ponendi intellectum agentem: et differimus ab eo in natura intellectus materialis; et differimus a Themistio in natura intellectus qui est in habitu, et in modo ponendi intellectum agentem; et nos etiam quoquo modo convenimus cum Alexandro in natura intellectus qui est in habitu et alio modo differimus." De Anima, III, comm. 20, p. 326.

Averroes agrees with Alexander in the latter's view of the active intellect, which they both differentiate from the material intellect. But Averroes rejects Alexander's view of the material intellect as something perishable. As to Themistius, Averroes cannot accept his view of the intellect in action as eternal throughout. The intellect in action for Averroes is partly perishable, when directed toward sensory data—a point in which he is one with Alexander—, partly eternal, when directed toward purely abstract forms,—a point in which he parts ways from Alexander.

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"Et ideo opinatus est Themistius quod nos sumus intellectus agens, et quod intellectus speculativus nihil est aliud nisi continuatio agentis cum intellectu materiali tantum. Et non est, sicut existimavit." De Anima, III,

comm. 20, p. 325.

45 "Intellectus agens ordinatur ex ultimo horum (scil. orbium) in ordine, et ponamus ipsum esse motorem orbis lunae." Epit. metaphys. fol. 184, col.

4, See Hercz, op. cit., p. 5.

46 "Oportebit quod quoniam [anima] separata fuerit a corpore quod sit una et eadem in omnibus, videlicet, in numero." Destr. Destr. disp. I, dub.

II, p. 11.

47 "Et ideo dicimus quod anima est similis luci: quia sicut lux dividitur divisione corporum lucentium, postea unitur lux remotis lucentibus corporibus, sic recte est de anima cum corporibus." Destr. Destr. disp. I, dub. 8, p. 9.

different individual dispositions. When the sun, the active intellect, sends out his rays on the dewdrops, the smooth glassiness of these drops becomes luminous, capable of mirroring external objects, and this luminosity, a common character in every dewdrop, may be compared to the material intellect. The material intellect, in our comparison the sunny luminosity, is not an emergence from the dewdrops. Water can never turn into sunshine. Rather, the material intellect is to be conceived as identical with the sun which radiates actively and is luminous passively, although its luminosity can come into existence only in the presence of dewdrops. The radiance of the sun—the active intellect—in conjunction with the luminosity of the sun-the material intellect-results in a refraction, different altogether according to the individual drop of dew. This refracted light is, in the terminology of Averroes, the "intellect in action", the "habitual", "speculative", or "adopted" intellect.48

At the time of the disappearance of the dewdrops, their glassy surface and the refracted light, that is, the passive intellect and the intellect in action, disappear also. Death, however, cannot touch the material and active intellect. The effulgence of the sun, released from the state of bodily differentiation, returns into itself. Our Mind, therefore, exists eternally, yet not as an individual soul, but as an aspect or a moment of the one, indestructible, universal soul of the human species.49

48 The habitual intellect, νοῦς ἐπίκτητος or νοῦς καθ' ἔξιν, is clearly identified with the intellect in action and the speculative intellect in the following: "Der Intellect in habitu ist die Intelligibilia welche er in actu besitzt." (Three

Treatises, p. 40).

"Et intelligemus per ipsum [intellectum agentem] res abstractas, non ita quod intellectus qui est in habitu intelligat hunc intellectum [agentem], cum intellectus qui est in habitu est generabilis et corruptibilis, iste autem [agens]

mon est generabilis neque corruptibilis" (De Anima, III, comm. 36, p. 329). "Intellectus speculativus nihil aliud est nisi perfectio intellectus materialis per intellectum agentem" (De Anima, III, comm. 5, p. 320). "Alexander autem opinatur quod intellectus qui est in habitu: et est speculativus, est alius ab intellectu agente" (De Anima, III, comm. 20, p.

326).

49 "Intellectus materialis est unicus omnibus hominibus . . . generatio igitur et corruptio non est ei, nisi propter multitudinem [intentionum receptarum] cortuption non est et, mist propter muntitudinem [intentionium receptarum] contingentem ei . . . et ideo necesse est ut illud intellectus [materialis] non sit corruptibile simpliciter sed corruptibile in respectu uniuscuiusque individui" (De Anima, III, comm. 14, p. 324).

"Dicimus nos quod nullus sapientium ut invenimus opinatur quod anima innovetur et post mortem corporis remaneat, nisi Avicenna tantum" (Destr. Destr. disp. I, dub. 23, p. 23). See also: Überweg, op. cit. II, p. 318.

Since the life of the Mind in us is partly passive, partly active, Averroes in his investigations gives a very careful analysis of the relationship or conjunction of the two. He finds that "the active intellect is a cause of the material intellect not only as an efficient cause, working from the outside like the light which produces vision in the eye, but also by being its last perfection as form and final cause". 50 In fact, as he continues: "It seems that its [the active intellect's] conjunction and operation resembles more a conjunction of the form with the matter than a conjunction of an efficient cause with its effect. . . . The relationship of the active to the material intellect can be compared to the maker of earthen wares who as Themistius says, is (with his shaping power) present in the clay",51 a conjunction called by Averroes "conjunction by existence".52

But what does the active intellect inform in the material intellect, which by its nature is a mere potentiality perfected by no form whatever? "For", as Averroes says, "could it [the material intellect] be perfected by a form, this form would either hamper the reception of other forms, or it would change the form by receiving them",58 an observation which would be appreciated by Schillerian humanists and critical realists in general.

The answer to this question, in a true Aristotelian fashion,54 is that the material intellect (prima perfectio) can never become intellect in action (postrema perfectio)55 without the perception of concrete existents. A phantasm is to be deposited in the sensitive part of the soul⁵⁶ and "the rational soul has to consider the inten-

⁵⁰ Three Treatises, I, p. 36. si "Intellectus agens non quemadmodum ars seorsum a sua materia est, sed totus intellectui potentiae intextus immersusque habetur; finge excussorem in aere aut in ferro esse, non extrinsecus nonne pervadet penetrabitque in materiam universam?" Themistius, De Anima, 93a, 19, cap. 25, Venice, 1502. See in Hannes, Treatise, p. 50.

Treatise, p. 47. 53 Treatise, p. 21.

[&]quot;Si namque habuerit formam propriam rerum tunc illa forma impediet eum intellectum materialem a recipiendo formas diversas extraneas, quia sunt aliae ab ea." Averr. De Anima, III, comm. 4, p. 320.

"Oὐδέποτε νοεῖ ἄνευ φαντάσματος ἡ ψυχή, i.e. "The soul never knows without a phantasm". De Anima, I, 3, p. 431, a16.

"Intellectus materialis est prima perfectio hominis . . . et intellectus speculativus est postrema perfectio." De Anima, III, comm. p. 320.

"Intellectus materialis nihil intelligit sine intellectu passibili." De Anima, III comm. 20. 226.

III, comm. 20, p. 326.

tions which are in the imaginative power".57 The process of abstraction and the producing of the universal concept is performed by the active intellect which "creates and generates the ideas both intelligible and understood".58 "The mind", as Averroes says, "excerpts the forms of extrinsic things from their material",59 and "makes the intentions which are in the imaginative power to be actual movers of the material intellect to understand after they were potential movers".60

The following simile of Averroes illustrates this process quite successfully: "The relation of the active intellect to this material intellect is the relation of the light to the transparent medium, and the relation of the material forms to the same [the material intellect] is the relation of color to the transparent. For just as the light is the perfection of the transparent, in the same manner, the active intellect is the perfection of the material intellect. And as the transparent is not moved by a color nor does it receive it except when there is light, in the same way this [material] intellect does not receive the intelligible things which are present unless it is perfected by the [active] intellect and is illumined by it. And just as the light brings the color from potentiality to actuality so that it can move the transparent, in the same way the [active] intellect makes the potential intentions to be actually understood so that the material intellect can receive them."61 By the cooperation of the active intellect, thus, Averroes hopes to circumvent the antinomy of matter moving spirit,62 later so keenly felt by Descartes. In

"Et ideo anima rationalis indiget considerare intentiones quae sunt in virtute imaginativa." *Ibid.*, III, comm. 5, p. 320.

"S" "Intellectus quae creat et generat intelligibilia et intellecta est intelligentia agens." *Ibid.*, III, comm. 5, p. 321.

""Mens aufert eas [formas rerum extrinsecarum] a materiis et facit eas primo intellecta in actu." *Ibid.*, III, comm. 4, p. 320.

""Agens... est illud quod facit intentiones quae sunt in virtute imaginativa esse moventes intellectum materialem in actu postquam erant moventes.

tiva esse moventes intellectum materialem in actu postquam erant moventes

in potentia." *Ibid.*, III, comm. 5, p. 322.

61 "Respectus intellectus agentis ad istum intellectum [materialem] est respectus lucis ad diaphanum et respectus formarum materialium ad ipsum respectus lucis ad diaphanum et respectus formarum materialium ad ipsum est respectus coloris ad diaphanum; quemadmodum enim lux est perfectio diaphani, sic intellectus agens est perfectio intellectus materialis, et quemadmodum diaphanum non movetur a colore, neque recipit eum nisi quando lucet, ita iste intellectus [materialis] non recipit intellecta quae sunt hic nisi secundum quod perficitur per illum intellectum [agens] et illuminatur per ipsum. Et quemadmodum lux facit colorem in potentia esse in actu, ita quod possit movere diaphanum, ita intellectus agens facit intentiones in potentia intellectas in actu, ita quod recipit eas intellectus materialis." De Anima,

III, comm. p. 322.

"Die materiellen Formen bewegen diesen Intellect [materiellen] vermit"Die materiellen Formen bewegen diesen Intellect [materiellen] vermit"Die materiellen Formen bewegen diesen Intellect [materiellen] vermit-

Averroes' thought the spiritual power that activates our material intellect is the same power that makes the potentially knowable objects actually knowable; the transparent and color are enlightened by the same light. In this way, the intellect, as a matter of fact, perceives itself by itself; "the intellectual and the intelligible will be identified";68 the object of thought becomes the product of thought. The active intellect in this set-up presents dim anticipations of the a priori forms of later idealistic philosophies.

The active intellect, however, functions not only as an efficient and formal but as a final cause also. In this sense, the active intellect is considered as an end which attracts our human minds to find in a union with it the ultimate perfection of our individual intellect in action. The condition of obtaining this end is liberation from passions⁶⁴ and from the particular, externally gained images,⁶⁵ a view in which Averroes clearly sacrifices his empiricism to mysticism. His peripatetic doctrine about the necessity of sensory images⁶⁶ comes into conflict with his rationalistic bias, according to which "the more a man is capable to think without phantasm, the higher his intellectual faculty is".67 The "conjunction by comprehension" is described by Averroes in the following manner: "In so far now as the active intellect cannot enter with the intellect in action into a conjunction by comprehension, because this latter is something that originated, and in that case—assuming the impossible-knowledge would originate in that which is eternal, it remains that the conjunction must be a comprehension of the separate intellect by the intellect in action. If now someone should

Beweger das bewegen soll, was an keiner Materie ist." Three Treatises, p.

Seweger das bewegen son, was an kenner Materie ist. Times Treatises, p. 54.

Three Treatises, p. 54. The Aristotelian theory of the identity of the νοῦς, νόησις, and νοητόν, is well known from Metaph. I, 7, 14. and XII. 7 and 9; also De Anima III, 4.

"Darum begreifen wir die Form des aktiven Intellekts so lange nicht, als der sogenannte Intellekt in actu (oder: 'in habitu') als ein wirkliches Wesen in uns besteht, und dies ist der Intellekt, dessen Existenzursache in uns die (durch Leidenschaftlichkeit unserer) Natur (beeinflusste) und (getrübte) Selbstbestimmung ist." Treatise, p. 51.

"Three Treatises, p. 54.

"Sine virtute imaginativa et cogitativa nihil intelligit intellectus qui dicitur materialis" (De Anima, III, comm. 20, p. 326). "Anima rationalis indiget considerare intentiones quae sunt in virtute imaginativa" (Ibid., III, comm. 4, p. 320). "Intellectus materialis nihil intelligit sine intellectu passibili" (Ibid., III, comm. 20, p. 326).

"Hannes' summarized view quoted on p. 39 of his translation of the Treatise.

Treatise.

say that . . . this is impossible, our answer is: obviously, if the habitual intellect continued in existence in the moment of conjunction, necessarily something not eternal would grasp the eternal. But the habitual intellect when it is raised by the active intellect will be extinguished, and the material intellect . . . will be united with the active intellect . . . without being raised from a temporal (vergänglich) existent⁶⁸ to an external one."⁶⁹

This conception, strongly reminiscent of Sufi mysticism, has been open to many criticisms in the ensuing centuries. When Averroes said that the intellect in action, insofar as it is multiple by turning to sensory data, is perishable, and is eternal insofar as it is one by turning to the pure form,70 he not only introduced an awkward duality into the mind, but, in the words of the Renaissance writer Pomponazzi, actually deified the human intellect, a charge which Averroes tried to forestall in the preceding quotation. "To say", objects Pomponazzi, "that the intellect has two modes of knowing, viz., one without a phantasm at all and another with a phantasm, is to transform human nature into the divine one . . . and thus we would introduce a tale of Ovid, that is, the transmutation of one nature into another."71 Even though this statement does not quite do justice to Averroes, it points out successfully the weak point of his view, namely, the difficulty of understanding how the human soul, which is individualized by matter, 72 can be considered personal after the elimination of the sensory images.

The idea of liberation from sensory images leads Averroes to

⁶⁸ The material intellect, *cosmologically*, in its essence, is eternal, since it is substantially one with the active intellect; *psychologically*, however, it is temporal, since it originates in the human being by the contact of the active intellect with the passive, individual disposition.

^{**}Treatise, p. 53.

**Treatise, p. 53.

***"Duae istarum trium sunt aeternae, scilicet agens et recipiens: tertia [intellectus habitualis] autem est generabilis et corruptibilis uno modo, aeterna autem alio modo." De Anima, III, comm. 20, p. 1440b.

**The company of the compa

[&]quot;Dicere enim . . . ipsum intellectum duos habere modos cognoscendi, scilicet sine phantasmate omnino, et alium cum phantasmate, est transmutare naturam humanam in divinam . . et sic poneremus fabulas Ovidii, scilicet naturam in alteram naturam transmutari." Pomponazzi, De immortalitate animi (1516), Cap. ix. See in Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*. B. G. Teubner, Leipzig, Berlin 1927, p. 147.

"2" ("Causa am pluralitatis seu numeralitatis est materia . . . nullum namque individum and elici individue debet ob elicus propietate nairi con individue and elici individue debet ob elicus propietates nairi con successivate.

¹² "Causa nam pluralitatis seu numeralitatis est materia . . . nullum namque individuum ab alio individuo distingui debet ab aliqua proprietate nisi per accidens: imo individua ab invicem distinguuntur materiā." *Destr. Destr.* disp. I. dub. 7, p. 8.

significant speculations regarding the nature of the separate or active intelligence. "If a being were free from matter", he says, "its intellect would be identical with the intelligible object altogether."73 For that reason, the separate intelligence in its activity does not depend upon the knowledge of external things,74 for, in that case, it would be caused by the thing known and, thus, it would not be its own cause.75 Far from this being the case, "the order of beings follows the order of separate intelligence",76 inasmuch as the same principle that causes the order of ideas also causes the order of things.77 "The [separate] intellect which is followed by the things understands by necessity the realm of beings, not as if it would know anything externally, but by understanding any order of beings all by itself."78 "The separate intellect does not know anything but itself and by knowing itself it knows all things because its understanding is nothing else but the order of all things."79 This is an important point in the knowledge of the human intellect. Our intellect, although enmeshed in matter and sensory images, because of its essential identity with the separate or active intellect, participates, to a certain degree, in the pure activity of that intellect.80 "The soul of comprehension is the soul of existence"81 in our own mind too.

The similarity between these ideas of Averroes and Spinoza's

⁷⁸ "Si aliquis fuerit sine materia tunc intellectus ipsius idem esset quod intelligibile omnimode." *Destr. Destr.* disp. VI. dub. 2, p. 73.

⁷⁴ "Imo necessarium est in eo quod est separatus intellectus quod non dependat in sua intellectione rerum seu entium de illis rebus." *Destr. Destr.*

disp. VI. dub. 2, p. 73.

Tunc nam causaretur [intellectus agens] ab illo ente quod intelligit, et non esset ipsius causa." *Ibid.*, disp. VI. dub. 2, p. 73.

Ordo nam entium sequitur ordinem intelligentiarum separatarum, sicut ordo nostri intellectus sequitur ordinem entium." *Ibid.*, disp. III. dub. 18,

p. 44.

"Sequitur necessario quod sit haec scientia ordinata quae est sine dubio

""Sequitur necessario quod sit haec scientia ordinata quae est sine dubio causa ordinis cuiuscumque entium et quod intellectus hic sit ordo ex quo causatur hic ordo." *Ibid.*, disp. VI. dub. 2, p. 73.

""Et ille intellectus [agens] quem entia sequuntur, intelligit necessario entia in eo quod intelligit de seipso ordinem cuiuslibet entium, non quod intelligat aliquid extra se." *Ibid.*, disp. VI. dub. 2, p. 73.

""Intellectus separatus non intelligit nisi seipsum et intelligendo seipsum intelligit omnia entia quia intellectio sua non est aliud nisi omnium entium ordo." *Destr. Destr.* disp. VI. dub. 2, p. 73.

""Et ideo non est imaginandum quod in eo [in intellectu agente] sit aliqua differentia inter comprehendens et comprehensum. Sed intellectus noster non sic se habet, quia in eo dicta duo differunt aliquo modo. Sed est quaedam similitudo inter nostrum intellectum et praedictum." *Ibid.*, disp. VI. dub. 2, p. 73.

p. 73. "Die Seele des Begreifens ist die Seele der Existenz." Treatise, p. 40, 42.

proposition that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things"82 is clearly evident. Can a historical relationship between the famous Tew and the famous Arabian be established? The clue is furnished by Spinoza himself, who in the *Note* to his above quoted proposition makes the following remark: "This truth seems to have been dimly recognized by those Jews who maintained that God, God's intellect, and the things understood by God, are identical."83 The term "Jews" may refer either to Leone Ebreos (d. betw. 1520-35) and his Dialoghi d'amore or to another favorite author of Spinoza, Levi ben Gerson (d. 1344), whose Averroistic teachings are well known to scholars.

To be sure, Spinoza's conception of the human Mind as "part of the infinite intellect of God''84 and Averroes' doctrine of the Mind are not the same. Averroes' active intellect in its inner nature is not God himself but the intelligence of the lowest of the spheres. In its function, however, the active intellect resembles closely Spinoza's infinite intellect. Just as Averroes' active intellect knows everything by knowing itself, in the same manner "God's power of thinking is equal to his realized power—that is, whatsoever follows from the infinite nature of God in the world of extension (formaliter), follows without exception in the same order and connection from the idea of God in the world of thought (objective).85 And just as in our present state, according to the teaching of Averroes, because of the particularity and materiality of our intellect in action, "our intellect fails in the comprehension of the nature of things",86 in the same manner, according to Spinoza, when "God has this or that idea, not in so far as he is infinite, but in so far as he is displayed through the nature of the human Mind",87 "the Mind has not an adequate but only a confused knowledge of itself, of its own body, and of external bodies".88 From this it follows that to know adequately the order of things, we must unearth in our Mind89 the order of ideas in their unalloyed

^{**} Ethics, II. prop. 7.

** Ethics, II. Prop. 7. Note.

** Ethics, II. Prop. 7. Corol.

** Intellectus noster deficit in naturarum rerum comprehensione." Destr. disp. VI. dub. 2, p. 73.

** Ethics, II. Prop. 11. Corol.

** Ibid., II. Prop. 29. Corol.

** Whenever it [the mind] is determined in anywise from within, it regards things clearly and distinctly." Ethics, II. Prop. 29. Note.

purity, by identifying ourselves to the utmost with the active intellect of Averroes or with the infinite intellect of Spinoza, "in so far this constitutes the essence of the human Mind".90

Averroes' conception of the separate intellect which by knowing itself knows everything91 becomes, in his thought, the source of a remarkable intuition with reference to the mystery of consciousness. He explains this greatest of all phenomena by pointing out that the material intellect in us can comprehend itself for no other reason but that it possesses a power of receptivity, which is according to the self-receptive nature of the separate intellect.92 We are endowed with the quality of self-awareness, because it is the nature of the active intellect in us to be conscious of everything by being conscious of itself.

The import of Averroes' doctrine of the Mind may be seen in the external criterion of its historical metempsychoses. Next to the affinity which the views of Averroes bear to Spinozism, we may trace their reappearance from Malebranche's "raison universelle", through Eduard von Hartmann's "Philosophy of the Unconscious", to Carl G. Jung's "Collective Unconscious" in our own day. According to Malebranche we can know the world only when our soul is so closely united with the universal, divine intellect that we can know all things in God.93

Only when one has come to see that consciousness does not belong to the essence, but to the phenomenon, that thus the plurality of the consciousness is only a plurality of the appearance of the One, only then will it be possible to comprehend the essential unity of all corporeal and spiritual phenomenal individuals, which Spinoza apprehended in his mystical conception and declared the one Substance. . . . And if it is possible for the unconscious soul of an animal to be simultaneously present and purposively active in all organs and cells of the animal, why should not an unconscious world-soul be simultaneously present and purposively efficient in all organisms and atoms, since indeed the one and the other must be thought as unlocalized?93a

³⁰ Ibid., II. Prop. 11. Corol. ⁹¹ "So Intellektuelles und Intelligibles werden Eins . . . das Wirkende und das Bewirkte eine Substanze werden, so dass er sich überhaupt selber wahrnimmt und dieses ist notwendiger Weise der separate Intellekt." *Three*

Treatises, p. 54.

22 "Und dass er [der materielle Intellekt] nur deshalb sich selber begreift, weil in ihm eine Reception ist, welche von der Naturart der Reception der separaten Intellekte ist." Three Treatises, p. 54.

38 "Nous voyons toutes choses en Dieu." Rech. de la Vér. III. 2, 6.

38 "Rech. of the Unconscious by Eduard von Hartmann, page 226.

^{103a} Philosophy of the Unconscious, by Eduard von Hartmann, page 226. Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1931.

Tung teaches that "the collective unconscious is not individual, but universal, is self-identical in all men and thus constitutes a psychic foundation, superpersonal in its nature, that is present in every one of us".94 A special study may bring to light momentous similarities between Averroes and German Idealism. Such a study might discover resemblances of the intellect in action with the Kantian "empirical self" and of Averroes' separate intellect with Kant's "transcendental self". Even closer relationship may be established between the separate intellect and the universal and absolute self of post-Kantian absolute idealism.

The real historical significance of Averroes' doctrine of the Mind is that in it he has elevated the human power of thought from its isolated state of particularity to a superindividual level, where the Mind becomes an absolute unity, universal, impersonal, and ontologically objective in character. How this simple, unitary substance performs thinking operations as a single act, while apparently diversified in the multiplicity of individual thinkers, remains the crux of Averroes' theory and he is keenly sensitive to it. "How the material intellect", he says, "which is neither generable nor corruptible is numerically one in all individuals, and how the actually known things, that is, the speculative intellect, are numbered according to the number of individuals who are generable and corruptible, is a very difficult question and extremely ambiguous."95 He is convinced that "from the first which is simple and one, only one thing can proceed".96 And yet the stubborn fact of particularity and individuality in thought remains. Averroes explains this connection of the one with the many in terms of a merely external and contingent relation of the universal Mind with the body and with the sensory images externally received from the environment of the body.97

⁸⁴ Carl G. Jung. The Integration of the Personality (New York, 1939)

p. 52-53.

Ouaestio autem . . . quomodo intellectus materialis est unus in numero in omnibus individuis hominum, non generabilis neque corruptibilis: et intellecta existentia in eo in actu, et est intellectus speculativus, sunt numerata per numerationem individuorum hominum generabilium et corruptibilium per generationem et corruptionem individuorum: haec quidem quaestio valde est difficilis et maximam habet ambiguitatem." De Anima,

III, comm. 5, p. 321.

""Postquam primus est simplex et unus, non debet ab eo procedere nisi unum." Destr. Destr. disp. III. dub. 12, p. 34-35.

""Et iam declaratum est ex predictis dubitationibus quod impossibile est

Although Averroes reduces the individual soul to a cosmological force, that is, to one of the spherical intelligences,98 yet he cannot, on the basis of his statements, be called a pantheist. It is true that he comments favorably on the Sufi teaching according to which "there is no otherness [no independent individual] outside of Him [God]",99 but he adds that "this is esoteric knowledge, and that it would be just as wrong to spread it among the common crowd as to withhold it from those who are initiates".99 Averroes in this respect seems to follow the tagivva, i.e., "prudence" practice of the Shi'a branch of Mohammedans, especially those of the Druses¹⁰⁰ who taught that they were authorized to hide their intimate feelings and religious convictions "from people plunged in ignorance and darkness". 101 Averroes, therefore, might have been a pantheist at heart; outwardly, however, he differentiates the world with its imperfections from God in whose essence all things are contained purely and eminently. God is the formal cause of the world but not identical with it.

It is common knowledge that the antipodes of the "one and the many" have been alternately emphasized in various times, at various places, for various reasons. Christianity, which is basically a personalistic movement, has persistently refused to sacrifice the individual soul to any monistic principle. Personal experience taught Saint Augustine that "the soul knows nothing more than what is present in consciousness, and nothing can be more present to her than she herself". 102 Psychological introspection convinced Saint Thomas Aquinas in his book De unitate intellectus contra

ut intellectus [materialis] copuletur cum unoquoque hominum et numeretur per numerationem eorum . . . remanet ut continuatio intellectorum cum

per numerationem eorum . . . remanet ut continuatio intellectorum cum nobis hominibus sit per continuationem intentionis intellectae cum nobis, et sunt intentiones imaginatae." De Anima, III, comm. 5, p. 322.

8 Averroes enumerates the spheres in the Destructio Destructionis as follows: Luna, Mercurius, Venus, Sol, Mars, Juppiter, Saturnus, Octava sphera.

8 "Aus diesem Grund lehrten die ersten Mystiker: 'Es gibt kein Er ausser Ihm. Alles dieses ist jedoch esoterisches Wissen und darf nicht durch Schriften verbreitet, noch seine Annahme den Menschen zur Pflicht gemacht werden. Aus diesem Grunde ist es in den Offenbarungslehren nicht enthalten, und wer es am unrechten Orte vorbringt, begeht einen Frevel, ebenso wie derjenige, der es vor den Eingeweihten verbirgt." Max Horten, Die Hauptlehren des Averroes. 242.

lehren des Averroes, 242.

100 Founded by the Fatimid, Hakim (996-1020).

101 H. Lammens, Islam, Beliefs and Institutions, 145, 155, 167.

102 "Nihil enim tam novit mens, quam id, quod sibi praesto est, nec menti magis quidquam praesto est, quam ipsa sibi." Augustinus, De trinitate, XIV, 4. n. 7.

Averroistas that the doctrine of the "race-soul", instead of explaining, destroys thought which, as a matter of fact, functions always as the act of a self.¹⁰³ For reasons proper to the early Renaissance period Petrarch, Ficino,¹⁰⁴ and Nicholas of Cusa¹⁰⁵ were equally antagonistic to Averroes' doctrine of the active intellect.

On the other hand, the Asiatic spirit with its slower individual initiative; Neo-Platonism, reflecting the setting sun of the Greek genius; Dante, the dreamer of a world state, who placed the Averroist Siger of Brabant in Heaven; Bruno, the selfeffacing visionary; Spinoza, the God-intoxicated geometrician; German thought from Goethe to Hegel, representing an era of romantic escape, stressed the principle of the one as against the many.

Our present world, the woes of which are traced by many to an internal combustion of the forces of individualism, will probably be restored to a new balance by a re-emphasis on the principle of universalism, by a conquest of the idea of oneness over manifoldness. In the face of such prospects, Averroes' doctrine of the Mind may furnish valuable points for the discovery of deeper foundations upon which to build a unified human society.

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¹⁰³ Ernst Cassirer, op. cit., 134. ¹⁰⁴ "Quid enim menti naturalius, quam sui ipsius cognitio." Ficinus, Epistol.

Lib. I., fol. 628.

105 "Unde hoc nequaquam possibile arbitror unum esse intellectum in omnibus hominibus."/ Cusanus, *Idiota*, lib. III, de mente, Cap. 12, fol. 167 f. Cassirer, op. cit. 136-138.