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United with the Soul, Separated from the Organs: Dante and Aquinas (Purgatorio Canto XXV, 61–66.)

Ma come d'animal divegna fante,
non vedi tu ancor: quest' è tal punto,
che più savio di te fé già errante,
sì che per sua dottrina fé disgiunto
da l'anima il possibile intelletto,
perché da lui non vide organo assunto.
(*Purgatorio* Canto XXV. 61–66.)

Everyone seems to agree that the wise man referred to by Dante in line 63 of *Purgatorio* Canto XXV is Averroes.¹ Moreover, by virtue of this identification, it is generally taken for granted that the error preventing us, at least in Dante's view, from giving a correct description of the origin and nature of the intellective soul is *the* error of Averroes, i. e. the claim that the possible intellect is one for all men.²

¹ Or, at least, the principal target is Averroes. Dante might also have hinted at Guido Cavalcanti in line 63 (Inglese 2016. 306, notes to line 63). See further Falzone 2018 and footnote 3 below.

² See e. g. Di Siena 1886. 289; Cornoldi 1887. 486–487; Poletto 1894. 568; Mandonnet 1911. 302; Scartazzini 1920. 556.; Torraca 1921. 544–545; Sapegno 1957. 681; Scott 1963. 216; Casini – Barbi – Momigliano 1973. 572; Boyde 1981. 277–278; Cervigni 1993. 373; Marenbon 2001. 370; Martínez 2008. 284; Chimenz 2013. 632; Porro 2013. 253; Chiavacci Leonardi 2014. Note al Canto XXV. 62–66; Bianchi 2015. 78; Inglese 2016. 306–307; Falzone 2018. 278. In contrast, for an identification of the wise man's error in accordance with Dante's own words, without further reference to the thesis of the unity of the possible intellect, see e. g. Palmieri 1899. 343–344; Busnelli 1922. 227–230 and Falzone 754–758. The thesis of the unity of the possible intellect (hence abbreviated as TUI) has been attributed to Averroes since the 1250s (see Gauthier 1984. 221*–222*). It is hard to say, however, when TUI began to emerge as the error par excellence of Averroes. A few 14th century manuscripts refer to Aquinas's *De unitate intellectus* as a treatise targeting only one error, quite likely this specific error; see Thomas Aquinas 1976. 251–255. Or see e. g. the biography of Aquinas by William of Tocco (*Ystoria sancti Thome de Aquino*): “Quarum heresum prima fuit error Averrois, qui dixit unum esse in omnibus hominibus intellectum” (Le Brun-Gouanvic 1996. 136).

Certainly, Dante's exact and specific reference to *the possible intellect* as what is being separated from the human soul appears to be a strong indicator that the wise man who is in error can be identified as Averroes.³

As for the error, however, that Dante attributes to him, I think we need to be more cautious, for at least two reasons.

Firstly, because the thesis of the unity of the possible intellect seems to be completely irrelevant both to what precedes lines 61–66 and to what follows them in Canto XXV. Shades, whatever their internal constitution may be, appear in Dante's *Commedia* as singular entities.⁴ The issue that preoccupies Dante in *Purgatorio* Canto XXV is clearly not how it is possible that shadows are numerically distinct, but rather how they can have bodily characteristics at all: "How can one grow lean where there is never need for nourishment?"⁵

Secondly, because Dante is specific enough by saying that this wise man's error is separating the possible intellect from the human soul.⁶ I think we are safe to assume that Dante would have been able to articulate his different view, had he intended to refer to the error of the unity of the intellect. The key idea would seem far too obvious: this wise man is unable to account for the nature and origin of the individual human intellective soul, because he thinks that there is no such thing as an individual human intellective soul.

Instead, Dante unmistakably declares that the error of the wise man is that the possible intellect is separate from the human soul. Furthermore, he suggests that the source of his error is that the wise man did not find a proper organ for it.

³ There is an obvious terminological difference between Averroes and Dante given that the former used the expression "material intellect" in his *Long Commentary on the De anima of Aristotle* ("intellectus materialis", see the Latin version by Michael Scot in Averroes 1953, passim; see also the English translation of Michael Scot's Latin rendering: Averroes 2009, passim). Nevertheless, since the phrase "intellectus possibilis" became dominant in the 13th century (in accordance with the 12th-century translation of Aristotle's *De anima* 429a21–22 by James of Venice and its revision by Guillelmus de Moerbeke: "Quare neque ipsius esse naturam neque unam, set aut hanc quod possibilis", and with the translation by Michael Scot: "Et sic non habebit naturam nisi istam, scilicet quod est possibilis"; see Thomas Aquinas 1984, 201 and Averroes 1953, 387) and the two expressions were clearly regarded as synonyms by the second half of the century (see e. g. William of Baglione in Brady 1970, 38; Siger de Brabant 1972a, 37 and 40; Thomas Aquinas 1976, 291,10–11), one can readily assume that Dante indicates Averroes as the wise man in line 63. It was also raised that the phrase "più savio di te" could refer to Aristotle (see e. g. Toynbee 1898, 48, with a failed allusion to "intellectus agens" and Torraca 1921, 544, who nevertheless hints at the "extreme consequences" drawn from Aristotle's theory by Averroes), but this hypothesis was convincingly rejected by Busnelli (Busnelli 1922, 228). For the use of the term "intellect" in Dante, see Scott 1963.

⁴ On the concept of shade ("ombra") in Dante, see Gilson 1967; Gragnolati 2003, 200–203; Porro 2013; Falzone 2014.

⁵ *Purg.* XXV, 20–21. Translated by Allen Mandelbaum.

⁶ "Separated" ("disgiunto") in "per sua dottrina fé disgiunto / da l'anima il possibile intelletto" can be understood in two ways: (1) the possible intellect is separated from the human soul in its being and (2) the possible intellect is separated from the human soul in its operation. It seems obvious that Dante meant the former when he referred to the wise man's teaching. The second claim represents Aquinas's approach, see footnote 43 below.



Dante's aim is to replace the wise man's false teaching as it is indicated in lines 64–66 with the true narrative of Statius (67–78). Right before the concluding lines (73–75) Statius declares that the human soul that “vive e sente e sé in sé rigira” is substantially one, in clear contradiction to what the wise man teaches by separating the functional unit of the intellective part of the soul from the organic body along with its vegetative, motive and sensitive functions.⁷ Again, there is no reference whatsoever to the thesis of the unity of the intellect. As a matter of fact, Dante's words indicate that he seems unequivocally committed to the principle that a human being is not a being per accidens.⁸

Why is it just Averroes and not another of the many substance dualists who lived before and during Dante's time who threatens the substantial unity of the human being by separating the intellect from the human soul in Canto XXV? Why is it that it is not the unity of the possible intellect, but another aspect of Averroes's doctrine that is being referred to by Dante as his cardinal error, thus confounding later commentators of Canto XXV?

Dante's choice to select Averroes as a representative substance dualist seems a reliable indicator that the primary source of Statius's narrative in lines 61–66 is Thomas Aquinas.⁹ Indeed, it was Aquinas who masterfully and influentially connected Averroes's position and Plato's substance dualism throughout his œuvre. Certainly, Aquinas emphasized that Averroes did not invent a new theory “concerning the union of the intellectual soul with the body”, but rather “discovered an additional reason for holding that the intellectual soul cannot be united to the body as its form.”¹⁰ Moreover, as a consequence, Aquinas inves-

⁷ For the development of these functions, see lines 52–57. Dante uses a well-known and widely used phrase from Aristotle's *De anima* II. 2 (414a12): “anima autem hoc quo uiuimus et sentimus et mouemur et intelligimus primum”; see Thomas Aquinas. 1984. 82.

⁸ See also *Purg.* IV. 5–6: “e quest'è contra quello error che crede / ch'un anima sovr'altra in noi s'accenda.”

⁹ As is well known, Bruno Nardi made serious efforts to show that Dante deviated the most from Aquinas regarding the origin of the intellective soul. See e. g. Nardi 1912. 82, and Nardi 1960. 54, where he notes that regarding “the most delicate matter” of the formation of the intellective soul Dante was at least as far away from Aquinas as from Averroes in *Purgatorio* Canto XXV. (“Dante dissente dall'uno come dall'altro”; “È nella soluzione di questa difficile problema che Dante si scosta di nuovo da san Tommaso non meno che da Averroè”). I have no intention of measuring the imaginary distance of Dante from Aquinas or whoever else. I would just like to point out that the way Aquinas and Dante represent the error of Averroes displays a structural isomorphy which is specific enough to let us conclude that in this crucial respect Dante – directly or through intermediaries – followed Aquinas. For Nardi's efforts to demolish the idea of Dante as a faithful Thomist, see further Moevs 2005. 109 and Lenzi 2010. For the sake of simplicity, in what follows I will call any theory that denies the possibility of an immediate, substantial connection between the intellective soul and the body “substance dualism”.

¹⁰ See *Summa contra Gentiles* (abbreviated as SCG throughout the paper) 2.59: “Fuerunt autem et alii alia adinventione utentes in sustinendo quod substantia intellectualis non possit uniri corpori ut forma. Dicunt enim quod intellectus, etiam quem Aristoteles possibilem vocat, est quaedam substantia separata non coniuncta nobis ut forma.” (See Thomas Aquinas.

tigated substance dualism and TUI as two distinct, albeit closely related issues when discussing Averroes's theory of soul in his influential anti-Averroist work, the *De unitate intellectus*.¹¹ The significance of the issue of substance dualism for Aquinas is clearly indicated by the fact that about two third of *De unitate intellectus* – in contrast to what its most commonly used title suggests – concerns Averroes's claim that “the possible intellect” (...) “is a substance separate in its being from the body and not united to it in some way as its form” and only the last two chapters are devoted to the refutation of the thesis that the possible intellect is one for all men.¹² Aquinas was deeply convinced that not only the thesis of the

1918. 406 and 414; English translation: Thomas Aquinas 1956, 168 and 177). Although Aquinas does not name Averroes in this passage and uses both plural and singular references in the text (e. g. “alii”, “eiusdem”) the arguments that follow clearly show that Aquinas's primary target was Averroes in SCG 2. 59. See also the closing reference: “Now, for these reasons Averroes was moved, and, as he himself says, some of the ancients, to hold that the possible intellect, by which the soul understands, has a separate existence from the body, and is not the form of the body.” (Thomas Aquinas 1956, 178). Note that plural references in medieval Latin often indicate individuals.

¹¹ As is clear from the first lines of the work: “Inoleuit siquidem iam dudum circa intellectum error apud multos, ex dictis Auerrois sumens originem, qui asserere nititur intellectum quem Aristoteles possibilem uocat, ipse autem inconuenienti nomine materialem, esse quandam substantiam secundum esse a corpore separatam, nec aliquo modo uniri ei ut forma; et ulterius quod iste intellectus possibilis sit unus omnium hominum.” (Thomas Aquinas 1976. 291,7–15). Note, especially, the connective phrase Aquinas uses: “et ulterius”. For the titles, incipits and explicits of the work in the manuscript tradition see, Thomas Aquinas 1976. 251–255. Both “errores” and “error” are used with reference to Averroes's claim(s) discussed and refuted by Aquinas.

¹² Chapters I–III: 1426 lines, Chapters IV–V: 705 lines in the Leonina-edition (see Thomas Aquinas 1976. 291–314). It is important to emphasize that at least three more assumptions must be met to obtain TUI from the premise that “the possible intellect” (...) “is a substance separate in its being from the body and not united to it in some way as its form”. (1) Individuals are instances of (not necessarily subsistent) universals; (2) the principle of individuation is matter; (3) there is no such thing as spiritual matter. Although Aquinas accepts all three assumptions, he still denies that the possible intellect is separate from the body in its being and, consequently, that it is separate in its being from the rest of the soul. In Aquinas's view, Aristotle's reference to the separation of the possible intellect in his *De anima* III, 4 (429b5) means that the intellect does not have a corporeal organ whereas the sense power has. In other words, the intellect is separated only in its immaterial operation (thinking), but not in its being, as it is a power or part of the human soul which is the substantial form of the body. See Aristotle's *De anima* III, 4 429b4–5: “sensituum quidem enim non sine corpore est, hic autem separatus est” (Thomas Aquinas 1984. 201) and Aquinas's commentary to this passage (Thomas Aquinas 1984. 206–207). See further Aquinas's remark in his *De unitate intellectus* (no. 25–26) pointing out that an incorrect interpretation of the word “separate” was being used by Averroes and his followers in support of their “error” that “the intellect is neither the soul nor a part of the soul, but some separate substance” (see Keeler 1936. 17–18, no. 25–26; Thomas Aquinas 1976. 296,450–468; Zedler 1968. 33). For those who can read Hungarian see my translation of the *De unitate intellectus* with commentaries: Thomas Aquinas 1993. 45–46. For an Italian translation see Nardi 1938. 115.



unity of the intellect, but any denial of the substantial unity of the human being has immediate and absurd consequences.¹³

With his unique, balanced and relatively easy to follow approach, which delineates the relationship between substance dualism and TUI in relation to the main tenets of Averroes's philosophy of soul (i. e. basically his Aristotle-interpretation),¹⁴ Aquinas clearly stands out among his contemporaries when he writes the *De unitate intellectus*.¹⁵

To get an impression of how original Aquinas was in this respect, let us compare his position with two representative approaches from before 1270 with a focus on the relationship between substance dualism and the main tenets of Averroes's theory of soul, especially his notorious "error", the TUI.

(1) Some of Aquinas's contemporaries regarded the claim that the intellectual soul is a subsistent being ("hoc aliquid") as what provides us with protection from any attempt to prove the thesis of the unity of the intellect. On their account, the intellectual soul is individuated by spiritual matter and is being related to the body as its mover and ultimate perfection.¹⁶ At least one Franciscan theologian, William of Baglione even argues that Aquinas's theory – the intellectual soul is the only substantial form of the body – might lead to the TUI

¹³ See e. g. his remark concerning some basic matters of human life and death: "If, therefore, the intellect does not belong to this man in such a way that it is truly one with him, but is united to him only through phantasms or as a mover, the will will not be in this man, but in the separate intellect. And so this man will not be the master of his act, nor will any act of his be praiseworthy or blameworthy. This is to destroy the principles of moral philosophy. Since this is absurd and is contrary to human life (for it would not be necessary to take counsel or make laws), it follows that the intellect is united to us in such a way that it and we constitute what is truly one being. This surely can be only in the way in which it has been explained, that is, that the intellect is a power of the soul which is united to us as form. It remains, therefore, that this must be held without any doubt, not on account of the revelation of faith, as they say, but because to deny this is to strive against what is clearly apparent." (*De unitate intellectus* 3. no. 82; Thomas Aquinas 1976. 306,347–363; Zedler 1968. 57). "Furthermore, if a soul were in its body as a sailor is in a ship, it would follow that the union of soul and body is accidental. Consequently death, which signifies the separation of soul and body, would not be a substantial corruption, and this is obviously false." *Quaestiones disputatae De anima*, q. 1. (Thomas Aquinas 1996. 9,281–286; Robb 1984. 47).

¹⁴ Aquinas is reluctant to consider Averroes's theory of soul as a possible interpretation of Aristotle's *De anima*, because he is convinced that Averroes's theory contradicts Aristotle's doctrine. See e. g. SCG 2. 61: "Sed quia huic positioni Averroes praestare robur auctoritatis nititur propter hoc quod dicit Aristotelem ita sensisse, ostendemus manifeste quod praedicta opinio est contra sententiam Aristotelis." "Averroes, however, attempts to strengthen his position by appealing to authority, saying, therefore, that Aristotle was of the same opinion. We shall, then, show clearly that Averroes's doctrine is contrary to that of Aristotle." (Thomas Aquinas 1918. 428; Thomas Aquinas 1956. 191). See also SCG 2.70.

¹⁵ The *De unitate intellectus* had been written most probably in 1270, before 10 December when Stephanus Tempier's condemnation was issued (see Keeler 1936. XX–XXI; Thomas Aquinas 1976. 248–249; Torrell 1996, 348).

¹⁶ This kind of approach was widespread in the 1260s. In B. Carlos Bazán's apt words, this "eclectic anthropological dualism" was "hold by almost all Latin thinkers." See Bazán 2005. 603.

as we know it from Averroes's work.¹⁷ William thinks that the propositions "the rational soul is not a *hoc aliquid*" and "the rational soul is not the first perfection of the human body" strictly imply each other, therefore it is not possible to hold one of these propositions true and the other false without committing further errors.¹⁸ In William's view, if someone denies that the rational soul is a *hoc aliquid*, and at the same time admits that it is the perfection of the human body (as he thinks Aquinas does),¹⁹ then from his position it follows either that the soul perishes with the corruption of the body, or that it will not be an individual being if it survives. In William's view, this latter claim is based on the premise that the rational soul is a substantial form individuated by corporeal matter, therefore all those who maintain that the principle of individuation is matter are inclined towards the TUI, "the most pernicious error" of Averroes.²⁰ William also mentions

¹⁷ On William of Baglione, see Brady 1970 with an edition of some of his questions from 1266–1267. See further Bianchi 1984; Dales 1995. 120–126; Bazán 2005. 602–603. As for spiritual matter, John Peckham remarks that the immateriality of the possible intellect is the fundamentum of the TUI. See Johannes Peckham 1918. 49.

¹⁸ "Contrarium autem ponentes, quod scilicet anima rationalis non est hoc aliquid, et quod non est prima perfectio humani corporis, et sic non est prima perfectio hominis, favent illi perniciosissimo errori Commentatoris de unitate intellectus. Ista enim duo principalia sunt fundamentum illius erroris, sicut manifestissimum est inspicienti et legenti verba Averrois in illo passu. Propter quod isti errores consequuntur se, quamvis aliqui velint unum defendere sine alio." Brady 1970. 33. See also Bianchi 1984. 507; Dales 1995. 124.

¹⁹ In this regard, William seems to misrepresent Aquinas's thought. As far as the teaching of faith is concerned, Aquinas certainly was in tight agreement with most of his Western contemporaries, philosophers and theologians alike. See e. g. In Sent II.19.1.1 co.: "Quarta positio est quam fides nostra tenet, quod anima intellectiva sit substantia non dependens ex corpore, et quod sint plures intellectivæ substantiæ secundum corporum multitudinem, et quod, destructis corporibus, remanent separatae, non in alia corpora transeunt; sed in resurrectione idem corpus numero quod deposuerat unaquæque assumat." "The fourth position is that which our faith holds that the intellective soul is a substance that does not depend on the body, that there is more than one intellective substance corresponding to the multitude of bodies, and that they remain separate when bodies are destroyed, not passing into other bodies. Rather, in the resurrection each soul assumes the same body numerically that it had laid aside." (English translation is from <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.II.D19.Q1.A1.C.4>.) Furthermore, Aquinas – by means of the principle that "everything acts in accordance with its being" (unumquodque agit secundum quod est ens) – concludes from the immaterial, organ-less operation of the intellect that the it does not depend in its being on the body. However, since the only way available for the intellective soul to acquire immaterial knowledge is to abstract intelligible species from the representations of singular, material objects, the intellect cannot be complete in its species („completum in specie") i. e. it cannot act in full accordance with its own immaterial nature, since it does not actually possess all those things that are required for such type of activity. Therefore, in Aquinas's view, "although a soul could subsist per se, it does not possess a complete nature, but its body is joined to it to complete its nature." See Quaestiones disputatae de anima q.1. (Thomas Aquinas 1996. 3–12). For the English translation, see Robb 1984. 42–51.

²⁰ A similar objection was raised by the Franciscan William of Mare against Aquinas in the so-called Correctorium-controversy around 1280. In an attempt to refute William's claim, one of Aquinas's defenders (probably Richard Knapwell) indignantly remarks that "illum autem errorem Averrois de unitate intellectus possibilis destruit Thomas effective in tractatu de intellectu contra eundem; unde non fuit curiale errorem sibi imponere in hac parte." See Glo-

Averroes's famous remark on Aristotle's general definition of the soul²¹ but it is not at all clear on what ground calls the homonymy of the term "soul" a "non-sense" ("deliramentum").²² As a matter of fact, when William says that the rational soul is in the genus of incorporeal substances "as an individual substance and a hoc aliquid" but it is in a different genus "as a perfection which is a part of the human being", he creates a textbook example of a homonymous term.²³

Be that as it may, although Averroes appears here as the prominent representative of the TUI,²⁴ in William's and probably some other like-minded authors' view substance dualism protects us from the harmful consequences of the principles of Aquinas's theory of soul, with the TUI among them.²⁵

(2) Albert the Great, of whom Aquinas was a disciple between 1245 and 1252 and a secretary for years,²⁶ was one of the first theologians who attributed the error that there existed only one intellective soul to Averroes.²⁷ Albert, however, often limited the scope of Averroes's claim to the soul that survives the death of the individuals and did not attribute this error to the Commentator exclusively. For example, in his *De unitate intellectus* (probably around 1263),²⁸ out of the thirty philosophical arguments that Albert gathers or invents himself against the immortality of the individual intellective soul, only four can be identified as Averroes's own.²⁹ As a general rule, Averroes does not appear as the only or most salient defender of the thesis of the unity of the intellect, not even outside of the context of survival of the individual human soul.³⁰

rieux 1927. 47. On this point, see also Bianchi 1984. 517–518. In addition, another early defender of Aquinas, Thomas of Sutton argues that the thesis of the plurality of forms "directly entails" the error of Averroes that "the intellect is a separate substance". See Klima 2001. 438.

²¹ See Averroes's commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* II, 1 (412b4–5): Aristotle "induxit hunc sermonem in forma dubitationis, cum dixit: *Si igitur dicendum est*, excusando se a dubitatione accidente in partibus istius diffinitionis. Perfectio enim in anima rationali et in aliis virtutibus anime fere dicitur pura equivocatione (...)." Averroes 1953. 138. See also Averroes 1953. 397 and 405.

²² "(...) vere et proprie communicat ei diffinitio illa animae quam assignat Philosophus in secundo *De anima*, non aequivoce secundum deliramentum Commentatoris." Brady 1970. 33.

²³ "Ad illud quod obicitur de distinctione praedicamenti, dici potest quod anima rationalis ut est substantia individua et hoc aliquid est in genere substantiae incorporeae. Ut autem est perfectio talis quae est pars hominis, est in alio genere in quo est suum totum." Brady 1970. 26.

²⁴ See also the question on the unity of the intellect ("utrum in omnibus hominibus sit intellectus unus numero"): "Fuit autem circa hoc error illius Commentatoris, qui posuit unum intellectum numero in omnibus hominibus." Brady 1970. 38.

²⁵ See, again, John Peckham's remark cited in footnote 17.

²⁶ See Torrell 1996. 18–35.

²⁷ See R.-A. Gauthier's introduction to the critical edition of Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*: Gauthier 1984. *221.

²⁸ Albertus Magnus 1975. IX–X.

²⁹ At the same time, Averroes's *De anima*-commentary seems to be one of Albert's most important doxographical sources.

³⁰ See e. g. Albert's *De anima* commentary on Averroes: "Iste autem propter superius inductas rationes, sicut fere omnes alii concedunt unicum possibilem esse intellectum in om-

Furthermore, Albert never connects Averroes's position with Plato's substance dualism in his *De unitate intellectus*. On the contrary, criticizing Plato's theory of the three souls Albert refers to the critique of Plato by Averroes³¹ whom he considers a leading Peripatetic philosopher.³² Although it is clear from Albert's treatise that – in Averroes's view – the possible intellect is a separate and eternal entity,³³ it is a particularly striking feature of the text that Albert – in a *reductio ad absurdum* style argument – claims that no one regards the intellect as separate from the soul.³⁴ Similarly, in his *De anima* commentary written a few years earlier,³⁵ Albert emphasizes that whereas Plato “separated the intellectual soul from the sensitive, motive and vegetative soul” in respect of place and subject, the Peripatetics “did not bother to talk about separation in this way for they were convinced that the soul was substantially one and diversified only according to the powers in it.”³⁶

In sum, although Averroes appears as a defender (and, in some cases, as the most salient defender) of the thesis of the TUI, nowhere is he consistently portrayed as a philosopher who reinforced the flawed substance dualism by separating the intellect from those parts of the soul that perform bodily functions.

Connecting substance dualism and TUI in a sweeping critique of Averroes's philosophy by emphasizing the deep structural connection between them: this is, as I have already mentioned, a theoretical contribution by Aquinas.³⁷

nibus hominibus (...).” Albertus Magnus, *De anima* Lib. 3, Tract. 2, Cap. 7. See Albertus Magnus. 1968. 186.

³¹ Albertus Magnus 1975. 16.

³² See e. g. “In hac autem sententia nobiscum conveniunt et Averroes et Avicenna et plures alii Peripateticorum.” *De anima* Lib. 3, Tract. 2, Cap. 12. See Albertus Magnus 1968. 194.

³³ See Albertus Magnus 1975. 12.

³⁴ “Vigesima quinta ratio est fundata super hoc quod secundum dictum istorum sequitur, quod anima rationalis non sit anima, sed substantia separata. Sive enim accipiamus diffinitionem animae, quae est sicut conclusio, sive illam quae est sicut demonstratio positione differens, semper hoc sequitur, quod separatum secundum substantiam et esse nec est entelechia corporis organici potentia vitam habentis, nec est causa et principium huius vitae, quia separatum non tangit, et si non tangit, non agit neque operatur nec est causa operationis; igitur non est anima; quod autem est, id omnes confitentur.” (Albertus Magnus 1975. 19). For this point, see also Salmon 1935. 44. On the other hand, Albert says that “et haec ratio supponit, quod intellectus non sit pars animae, quod fere supponunt omnes Arabes, qui huius erroris primi sunt inventores.” (Albertus Magnus 1975. 8,16–18). This seems to imply that Averroes is not alone when he thinks that the intellect is not a part of the soul (although, in Albert's view, he may even represent an exception to the rule due to the adverb “fere”), but – above all – adequately shows the low level of consistency that is characteristic of Albert's work.

³⁵ Albertus Magnus 1968. V.

³⁶ *De anima* Lib. 3, Tract. 2, Cap. 3. See Albertus Magnus 1968. 180.

³⁷ The – possibly Pseudo – Aegidius Romanus in his *Errores philosophorum* regards substance dualism as a consequence of TUI. See Giles of Rome 1944. 22. (Ch. IV, 10–12). The *Errores philosophorum* was certainly written later than Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles* that was finished before September 1265 (Gauthier 1993. 10–18; 22; 122; 173 and 179; Torrell 1996. 101–104). The text was dated by Josef Koch between 1268 and 1273/74 and by Silvia Donati and Concetta Luna later than 1270/71, which strengthens the likelihood that it is



Right after linking Averroes to Plato's substance dualism at the beginning of SCG 2. 59, Aquinas remarks that Averroes attempts to confirm his position by having recourse to what Aristotle famously says about the intellect's characteristics in *De anima* III. 4: "separate, not mixed with the body, simple, impassible". In Averroes's view these are "things that could not be said of the intellect if it were the body's form."³⁸

Aquinas then presents a proof that draws upon a "demonstration by which Aristotle shows that, since the possible intellect receives all the species of sensible things through being in potentiality to them, it must be devoid of them all." What Aquinas refers here is a crucial premise of Aristotle's demonstration that the intellect cannot have a bodily organ. In a brief and scholasticism-friendly form the argument runs like this. The intellect must be potential, i. e. devoid of all things to be able to understand them. Should the intellect be mixed with the body as it is the case with the power of perception and the sense-organs, it would possess some quality that would prevent it from exercising its proper operation, understanding all things. But the intellect understands all things. Therefore, it is not mixed with the body and does not have an organ of its own: it is separate.³⁹

Averroes's first argument for substance dualism in SCG 2. 59, as Aquinas presents it, reconstitutes Aristotle's proof, but with a noticeable ontological spin. For Averroes (again, as Aquinas presents his reasoning) does not only argue that the possible intellect cannot have an organ to be able to understand everything, but also argues that it cannot be the form of the body, and therefore it must be separated in its being from the body.⁴⁰ Put differently, he argues that not only would it prevent the intellect from understanding all things if it were mixed with the body in its operation, but also if it were "a form of some body", since every material form "must share something of the nature of which it is the form". Consequently, the possible intellect must be ontologically separated from the body, as it cannot be "the act or form of a body."⁴¹ Since, however, Aristotle's general

even later than Aquinas's *De unitate intellectus*. For the authorship and the date of the *Errores philosophorum*, see the *Introduction* by Josef Koch in Giles of Rome 1944. esp. xxix–xl, and lv–lix. For some doubts about the authorship and the date, see Donati 1990. 28–30 and Luna 1990. 165–166.

³⁸ SCG 2.59. Thomas Aquinas 1918. 414; Thomas Aquinas 1956. 177.

³⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *De anima* III, 4 (429a12–429b5).

⁴⁰ See Averroes 1953. 385–386. and the footnote 20 above. For similar arguments in contemporary arts masters' works, see e. g. Siger of Brabant, *De anima intellectiva* Ch. III, (Siger de Brabant 1972a. 78); *Super Librum de causis*, q. 26: "In operatione formae et perfectionis materiae materia communicat, et sic in eius operatione habet organum. Intellectus autem in operatione sua non habet organum, ut dicitur tertio *De anima*. Ergo nec erit forma et perfectio materiae corporalis." (Siger de Brabant 1972b. 103), the "Anonymous of Giele" (Ignoti Auctoris *Quaestiones in Aristotelis libros I et II De anima*; see Giele 1971. 68–69).

⁴¹ SCG 2. 59. See Thomas Aquinas. 1918. 414; Thomas Aquinas 1956. 177–178. See also SCG 2. 69. For further parallel texts in Aquinas: *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* q. 1. and q. 2; In Sent II.1.2.4; In Sent II.17.2.1; *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* 3.9 and 3.11; *Summa theolo-*

definition of the soul is “the first actuality of the organic body”, (i. e. “the act or form of a body”), it follows that the possible intellect is not the soul nor a part of the soul, except homonymously.⁴²

How could this argument be refuted by someone who, like Aquinas, regards *De anima* III.4 as a correct analysis of the nature of possible intellect, but at the same time rejects all forms of substance dualism? Furthermore, since the argument for the separation of the possible intellect relies on a specific reading of Aristotle’s *De anima*, is it possible to provide a rival interpretation of the possible intellect’s nature and operation based on Aristotle general definition of the soul?

Aquinas also thinks that “not to be mixed with body” in Aristotle means that intellect does not have an organ, in opposition to the senses that do. An appropriate indicator of the organless nature of the intellect is that it is impassible, i. e. whereas the senses are “injured by an excessively intense sensible”, the intellect is not affected by its object in a similar way. In Aquinas’s view, Aristotle’s reference to the intellect’s impassibility shows that its organlessness has nothing to do with its status as a subsistent being. Quite the contrary, organlessness means only that the possible intellect is not connected in its operation to the organs of the body as the senses do. Similarly, Aristotle’s claim that the intellect is “separate” does not entail that it is separated in its being from the body, but only that it is separated from the other powers of the soul in so far as it does not need an organ to operate whereas the other powers do.⁴³

giae 1a.75.2; 1a.76.1; *De spiritualibus creaturis* q. 2; *Sentencia libri De anima: De anima* II, lectio 4; *De anima* III, lectio 7; *De unitate intellectus* 3.

⁴² On the general definition of the soul, see Aristotle’s *De anima* II. 1, 412b 4–5: “Hence, if it is necessary to say something which is common to every soul, it would be that the soul is the first actuality of an organic natural body.” (Aristotle 2016. 23). James of Venice: “Si autem aliquod commune in omni anima oportet dicere, erit utique actus primus corporis phisici organici” (see Thomas Aquinas 1984. 67); Michael Scot: “Si igitur aliquod universale dicendum est in omni anima, dicemus quod est prima perfectio corporis naturalis organici.” (See Averroes 1953. 138). See further Aquinas’s *De unitate intellectus* Ch. 3. no. 63: “Averroes held that the principle (...) that is called the possible intellect, is not the soul nor a part of the soul, except equivocally, but rather that it is a separate substance.” (Zedler 1968. 49). See further Averroes on the speculative intellect: “sermo de eo est ita quod sit extra istam naturam; existimatur enim quod non est anima neque pars anime” (Averroes 1953. 178; see also Averroes 1953. 160). See, again, Albertus Magnus who attributes this claim to the Arabs, and not specifically to Averroes: “intellectus non sit pars animae, quod fere supponunt omnes Arabes, qui huius erroris primi sunt inventores” (Albertus Magnus 1975. 8,16–18).

⁴³ “Now it is especially this last word that they take over to support their error, intending by this to hold that the intellect is neither the soul nor a part of the soul, but some separate substance” (Zedler 1968. 32–33. no. 24–25). See further Aquinas’s commentary on *De anima* III, 1: Thomas Aquinas 1984. esp. 205–207. In Aquinas’s view, the separation of the possible intellect means that it “is the act of no body, because its operation is not accomplished through a corporeal organ” (Keeler 1936. 19. no. 28; Thomas Aquinas 1976. 297.497–499; Zedler 1968. 34). Aquinas, on the other hand, contends that “the intellect is separate, inasmuch as it is not the act of an organ; but it is not separate inasmuch as it is a part or power of the soul which is the act of the body” (Keeler 1936. 27, no. 42; Thomas Aquinas 1976. 299.701–704; Zedler 1968. 39).



It is time to wrap all this up!

In Aquinas's view, Averroes erred when he held – based on a failed interpretation of Aristotle's argument that the intellect cannot have a bodily organ – that the possible intellect could not be a form of the body. This error led Averroes to the flawed conclusion that the possible intellect was separated in its being from the body and so from the other parts of the soul that inform the body. He thought that the possible intellect was neither the soul nor a part of the soul.

Not only it is a correct summary of Averroes's substance dualism from the point of view of Aquinas, but also an abundant paraphrase of *Purgatorio* Canto XXV, 61–66. Consequently, the way Aquinas and Dante represent the error of Averroes displays a structural isomorphy, which is specific enough to let us conclude that in this crucial respect Dante – directly or through intermediaries – followed Aquinas.

Does this mean that all hopes should be abandoned by those who wish Dante to be seen separated from Aquinas in this matter? I do not think so. The crystalline beauty and cosmological depth of Canto XXV will just do.

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