

THOMAS AQUINAS AND HIS CRITICISM OF AVEMPACE'S THEORY OF THE INTELLECT*

JOZEF MATULA

Univerzita Palackého Olomouc
(Palacky University Olomouc)
Centre for Medieval and
Renaissance Philosophy
Křížkovského 12
CZ-771 80 Olomouc
Czech Republic
matula@fnw.upol.cz

The article deals with Aquinas' relation to Avempace's theory of intellect, especially with his criticism of the conception of agent intellect as presented by Avempace. The author examines the parts of Aquinas' works where he rejects Avempace's theory of *coniunctio* as a union with the divine realm and Avempace's identification of imagination with intellect. The criticism is founded on the background of Aquinas' discussion with Averroism. The second part of the article deals with Aquinas' criticism of Avempace's theory of speculative sciences, which consist of the problem whether the ultimate happiness of man is to understand the separate substances. Aquinas criticizes the theory according to which through the pursuit of the speculative sciences man comes to the understanding of separate substances from the sensible things. Aquinas is very sceptical of this opinion and he strictly follows Aristotle's emphasis on senses and phantasms. The only things a human being can know in the speculative sciences are those that are grounded within the range of naturally known principles. The author shows the metaphysical presuppositions of Aquinas and Avempace which are momentous for the understanding of the different interpretations of Aristotle.

The present paper discusses two issues connected with Aquinas' criticism of some philosophical opinions of the Arabic thinker Ibn Bajja (known as Avempace in Latin). The first topic is Aquinas' criticism of

* I would like to thank Ms. Anna Akasoy from J.W. Goethe Universität for her useful remarks on Avempace and providing literature about Avempace.

Avempace's identification of imagination with intellect, which was also criticized by another Arabic thinker, Averroes,¹ and Aquinas' refutation of the theory of *coniunctio* or *continuatio*.²

The second question connected with Aquinas' criticism concerns the problem whether the ultimate happiness of man is to understand the separate substances. These two subjects are conjoined in the main problem of the definition of the intellect and the different commentaries on Aristotle's *De Anima*.

First of all, I would like to stress the fact that Thomas Aquinas knew Avempace's doctrines³ through the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*⁴ by Averroes, where he refers to the theory of the intellect and the question of the possibility of knowing the separate substances.⁵ Apart from Averroes there was another source of Avempace's opinions—that of Albert the Great.⁶ We can reconstruct Aquinas' relation to Avempace through some notes and references in various treatises of Aquinas.

¹ *SCG* II. c.67.

² G.P. Klubertanz, *The discursive power. Sources and doctrine of the Vis Cogitativa according to St. Thomas Aquinas*, The Messenger Press, Carthagenia, Ohio, 1952, pp. 166–173.

³ For more information on Avempace (Ibn Bajja, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn as-Say'igh), see H. Corbin, *Storia della filosofia islamica*, trad. di V. Calasso & R. Donatoni, Adelphi Edizioni, Milano, 1989, 231–237; E. Bondy, *Středověká islámská a židovská filosofie. Filosofie renesance a reformace* [Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy. Philosophy of Renaissance and Reformation], Vokno, Prague, 1995, pp. 72f.

⁴ Averrois Cordubensis, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. by F.S. Crawford, The Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge, Mass., 1953, p. 493.

⁵ *In Boeth. De Trin.* q.6, a.4. resp.; *SCG* III, c.41, c.43; *In IV. Sent.* d.49 q.2 a.1 resp.; *In IV. Sent.* d.49 q.2 a.7 ad 12; *ST* I, q.88 a.2 resp.; *De Ver.* q.18 a.5 ad 8; D.C. Hall, *The Trinity. An analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas' Expositio of the De Trinitate of Boethius*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1992, pp. 109–111; St. Thomas Aquinas, *The division and methods of the sciences. Questions V and VI of his commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, introduction, notes and translation by Armand Maurer, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, 1986⁴, 92n; *In II Sent.* d.17 q.2 a.1: “Utrum enim intellectiva vel intellectus sit unus in omnibus hominibus.” (parall. *ST*, q.76 a.2) *In II Sent.* d.17 q.2 a.2: “[...] intellectus possibilis nihil aliud est quam virtus imaginativa, secundum quod est nata ut sint in ea formae quae fuerunt intellectae in actu; et haec est opinio Avempace.” Alain de Libera writes that Avempace held the thesis that there exists only one intellect for all people and it is connected with the human soul by the “means of images” (*phantasmata*). This opinion is unacceptable, as Averroes states, because it reduces *intellectus materialis* to the “element of fantasy” only (E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge encyclopedia of philosophy*, Routledge, London, 1998).

⁶ According to Albert the Great, Avempace and Avicenna were “praecipui viri in philosophia”; in A. Caparelli, *Senso e Interiorità in Alberto Magno*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma, 1993, pp. 104, 109, 118.

As I have already said, Aquinas criticised the identification of the intellect with imagination.⁷ He attributed this opinion to Avempace (Ibn-Bajja)⁸ who was persuaded that the potential intellect was a corporeal faculty.⁹ Aquinas received the critical notes to Avempace from Averroes who reported that Avempace construed the *material intellect* as a disposition located in the imaginative faculty of the soul.¹⁰ Aquinas, through Averroes, noticed Avempace's mistaken opinion that the material intellect is a disposition inherent in the imagination¹¹ and he tried to prove that the intellect is not a part of the human body or a

⁷ *SCG* II, c.67: "Contra ponentes intellectum possibilem esse imaginationem"; *SCG* II, c.67: "wendet sich Thomas gegen die Meinung gewisser Leute, die mögliche Vernunft sei mit der Einbildungskraft identisch. Zu diesen Leuten gehören nach Averroes Abubacer and Avempace. Gegen ihre Theorie der möglichen Vernunft bringt Thomas vier Argumente vor, die mit Ausnahme des ersten Argumentes der aristotelischen Seelenlehre entlehnt sind"; in H. Hoping, *Weisheit als Wissen des Ursprungs: Philosophie and Theologie in Summa contra gentiles es Thomas von Aquin*, Herder, Freiburg, 1997, pp. 279f.

⁸ Aquinas used "Auēpache" in his manuscripts. See Thomae de Aquino, *Opera omnia* iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita, vol. 43, Editori di San Tommaso, Roma, 1976, p. 66.

⁹ *In II Sent.*, d.17 q.2 a.1 resp.: "alii dixerunt, quod intellectus possibilis nihil aliud est quam virtus imaginativa, secundum quod est nata ut sint in ea formae quae fuerunt intellectae in actu: et haec est opinio Avempace." This opinion is similar to that of Alexander of Aphrodisias and is rejected by Averroes (see A.M. El-Har, 'Ibn Rushd's (Averroes') doctrine of the Agent Intellect', doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University, 1982, p. 62). Cf. also: "Ibn Bajja (Avempace) stated that the term 'rational faculty' denotes 'in the first, spiritual forms insofar as they are able to receive intellect'. By 'spiritual forms' Ibn Bajja meant forms or images, in the imaginative faculty of the soul. Either by reading out the implications of that statement and similar statements in Ibn Bajja or by drawing on sources no longer extant or still undiscovered—as, for example, Ibn Bajja's *De anima*, the published text of which breaks off tantalizingly in the middle of the discussion of intellect—Averroes reports that Ibn Bajja construed the material intellect as a disposition located in the imaginative faculty of the soul. Averroes thus found himself before two poles, both of which are grounded in Aristotle. At the one extreme stood Alexander and Ibn Bajja, who construed the potential human intellect as a mere disposition either in the human subject, in the human soul, or specifically in the imaginative faculty of the soul. At the other extreme stood Themistius, who construed the potential intellect as a nonmaterial substance, which exists independently of the physical man and joins him at birth"; in H. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes, on intellect*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p. 261.

¹⁰ M.A. Blaustein, 'Averroes on the imagination and the intellect', doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 1984, pp. 162–173; D.L. Black, 'Consciousness and self-knowledge in Aquinas's critique of Averroes's Psychology', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31, 1993, pp. 349–385.

¹¹ Ibn Bajja had construed the human intellect as a disposition in the human organism; cf. Davidson (1992 : 200, 352).

faculty inherent to it.¹² Aquinas listed arguments against Avempace's theory of imagination and he tried to distinguish between imagination and intellect.

First of all, imagination is a corporeal faculty which human beings share with animals; as far as the intellect is concerned, however, we cannot talk about it in connection with animals.¹³ Aquinas claims that fantasy appears not only in man but also in other animals who dispose of keeping fantastic images (*imaginaria*) because also in the absence of sensual perceptions they are able to react to various situations. This ability to retain certain images is the basis of instinctive behaviour of animals. Contrary to man, however, in connection to animals we can in no way talk about the activity of intellect.

The second important argument of Aquinas is that there is no identity between what is moved and the mover. Phantasms move the passive intellect in a similar way as the sense-perceptible things move the sense itself. According to Avempace the intellectual faculty operates on images presented by the imaginative faculty, but if the intellectual faculty were nothing more than a guise of the imaginative faculty, a faculty would be operating in images presented to it by itself. This is impossible because a thing would receive itself and the mover would be the same as what is moved. Aquinas uses an analogy — as *sensibilia* move the sense, so phantasms move *intellectus possibilis*. For Aquinas, as for Aristotle a few centuries before, it is impossible for one thing to be a mover and a moved thing at the same time, in other words, that the identity of *movens et motum* is unacceptable.¹⁴ Aquinas emphasizes that fantasy is a kind of movement which cannot begin without a sensual stimulation and therefore it applies to corporeal things and individuals

¹² *Ibid.*: 286.

¹³ *ST* I, q.86 a.4 ad 3: “[...] animalia bruta non habent aliquid supra phantasia quod ordinet phantasmata, sicut habent homines rationem; et ideo phantasia brutorum animalium totaliter sequitur impressionem caelestem. et ideo ex motibus huiusmodi animalium magis possunt cognosci quaedam futura, ut pluvia et huiusmodi, quam ex motibus hominum, qui moventur per consilium rationis. unde Philosophus dicit, in libro De somn. et vigil., quod quidam imprudentissimi sunt maxime praevidentes, nam intelligentia horum non est curis affecta, sed tanquam deserta et vacua ab omnibus, et mota secundum movens ducitur.” Fantasy in animals (*animalia bruta*) is completely under the influence of celestial bodies. While a human being “moves” according to his own intellect and will, animals are under the influence of nature.

¹⁴ *SCG* II, cap.67: “Impossibile est idem esse movens et motum. Sed phantasmata movent intellectum possibilem sicut sensibilia sensum”; Aristoteles, *De Anima* (431a1–431b19).

only.¹⁵ And it is here that Aquinas finds a significant difference between senses and fantasy on one side and the intellect on the other. Intellect, on contrary to the senses and fantasy, can cognize universals and what is non-corporeal. Imagination deals only with things corporeal and singular; intellect, however, with things universal and incorporeal.

The third of Aquinas' arguments is that the intellect is not an actualisation of a bodily organ; fantasy, on the other hand, has a fixed bodily organ. The basic difference lies in the structure and function of intellect and fantasy. Intellectual activities do not rise from the activity of a bodily organ as they do in the case of fantasy. Aquinas supports these arguments by a quotation from the Bible: "ubi est Deus qui fecit me qui dedit carmina in nocte, qui docet nos super iumenta terrae et super volucres caeli erudit nos" ("Where is God my Maker, Who giveth songs in the night, Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, And maketh us wiser than the birds of the heavens?")¹⁶ in which the fundamental difference between animal and man is unveiled. This difference lies in the human cognitive ability that was given to man by God.¹⁷

Aquinas was more interested in the criticism of Averroes, however, where one of the most important matters was whether the intellectual part of human soul or the intellect is one for all people; this question appears already in one of the earliest Aquinas' treatises, in *Commentum in II Sententiarum*.¹⁸ Arguments in favour of one intellect contain several epistemological and metaphysical problems which are related to questions of individuation, the possibility of universal knowledge and the theory of *species intelligibilis*.¹⁹ Aquinas claims that if the thesis about the existence of one common passive intellect was to be accepted, then all people would have to receive the same *species intelligibilis* and if the intellect was individualized by a body, then *species intelligibilis* in the intellect would be also individualized which means that it could not be actually intelligible, i.e., universal.

¹⁵ Aristoteles, *De anima* (429a1-2); *De Unitate*, cap.3: "fantasia enim est motus a sensu secundum actum"; *SCG* II, cap.67: "Imaginatio non est nisi corporalium et singularium: cum phantasia sit motus factus a sensu secundum actum, ut dicitur in libro de Anima (428b11-12). Intellectus autem universalium et incorporealium est."

¹⁶ *Iob* 35, 10-11.

¹⁷ J. Aertsen, *Nature and creature: Thomas Aquinas's way of thought (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters XXI)*, Brill, Leiden, 1988, pp. 192f.

¹⁸ *In II Sent.*, d.17 q.2 a.1; d.19 q.1 a.1.

¹⁹ L. Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis: from perception to knowledge (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 48)*, vol. I, Brill, Leiden, 1994, pp. 156-179.

For Avempace, if *intellectus agens* makes a perfect conjunction (*coniunctio*) with man then man can understand the immaterial substances, similarly to *intellectus possibilis* that understands the material things.²⁰ According to Aquinas, however, in this case it would not be the substance of *intellectus agens* but only light (*lumen*) that would get connected to man because *intellectus agens* is not a separate substance²¹ which would be able to cognize immaterial substances. The connection to *intellectus agens* does not guarantee the cognition of immaterial substances because it is not in potentiality of this intellect to embrace all material things. *Intellectus agens* is a certain power of the soul which relates actively to the same things that are perceived by *intellectus possibilis*: “intellectus possibilis est quo est omnia fieri, intellectus agens quo est omnia facere.”²² The consequence of this attitude is that both of the intellects are related to corporeal things. *Intellectus agens* turns to the corporeal things by way of illumination and abstraction and makes *intelligibilia in actu* which are subsequently accepted by *intellectus possibilis*.

A problematic question for Aquinas is the character of *intellectus possibilis*. He states that *intellectus possibilis* is for some thinkers, such as Averroes, Themistius or Theophrastus, one for all people and is in potency to accept all intelligible forms.²³ The opinion that the passive as well as the active intellects are one and eternal intellect and are *species intelligibiles* Aquinas ascribes to Themistius and Theophrastus. Also for Averroes the active and the passive intellects are eternal and one for all people. If, however, there was only one common intellect for all, then, according to Aquinas, all people would cognize one and the same thing, at the same time, by only one common intellectual op-

²⁰ For a detailed analysis of Avempace's theory of *coniunctio*, see S. Pines, 'Limitation of human knowledge according to Al-Farabi, ibn Bajja, and Maimonides', in I. Twersky (ed.), *Studies in medieval Jewish history and literature*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979, pp. 82–109; A. Altmann, 'Ibn Bājjā on Man's Ultimate Felicity', in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, American Academy for Jewish Research, Jerusalem, 1965, pp. 47–87.

²¹ Aquinas did not criticize the theory about the identification of God with the *intellectus agens*, but in his first works he only noted that some *catholici doctores* identified God with the *intellectus agens*. In *Sent. II*, d.17 q.2 a.1 resp.; *Q. disp. de anima*, q.2.

²² *ST*, I, q.88 a.1; see Aristoteles, *De Anima* 430a10–430a25.

²³ Edward P. Mahoney remarks that Aquinas during his writing of the *In I–IV. Sententiarum* was not familiar with the Latin translation of the Themistius' paraphrases of the *De anima*. For that Aquinas cited Themistius via Averroes; cf. E.P. Mahoney, 'Aquinas's critique of Averroes' doctrine of the unity of the intellect', in D.M. Gallagher (ed.), *Thomas Aquinas and his legacy (Studies in Philosophy and History of Philosophy 28)*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1994, p. 85.

eration.²⁴ The argument that it is impossible for the intellect in the present state of life, in which it is conjoined to a corruptible body, to understand anything in actuality, except by *conversio ad phantasmata*,²⁵ is very important for Aquinas. Intellect needs phantasms as preparations for intellection: for the phantasms are preparations for the action of the intellect, as colours are for the act of seeing.²⁶ Averroes remarks that Aristotle expressly says that the relation of the intelligibles to the images is like the relation of colour to the coloured body, not like the relation of colour to the sense of sight²⁷ as Avempace poses. Therefore Averroes shows that Avempace's position is non-Aristotelian, and he recognised that Avempace is close to Alexander of Aphrodisias. Aquinas fully adopted Averroes' critical notes to Avempace and his criticism towards Avempace springs out of his repeatedly emphasized stress on the individual experience of thought.

According to Aquinas, intellect is *forma materialis* because it gives existence as a substantial form and is multiplied together with the multiplicity of matter.²⁸ It is, however, also called immaterial, due to non-corporeal operations such as thinking which comes out of its non-corporeal faculties. Another important argument is that *species intelligibilis* really has an individual existence in an individual intellect but at the same time it is a similitude (*similitudo*) of a specific nature which is to be found in various individuals.²⁹ Different from the separated substances, the human soul is multiplied numerically according to matter to which this soul is a perfection.

²⁴ *De unitate*, cap.4: "si intellectus sit unus omnium, sequitur quod omnium hominum idem intelligentium eodem tempore sit una actio intellectualis tantum".

²⁵ *ST I*, q.84 a.7., K. Rahner, *Spirit in the world*, trans. by W. Dych, Continuum, New York, 1994.

²⁶ Black (1993: 370).

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 367.

²⁸ *In II Sent.*, d.17 q.2 a.1 ad1: "quod intellectus non negatur esse forma materialis quin det esse materiae sicut forma substantialis quantum ad esse primum; et ideo oportet quod ad divisionem materiae, quae causat diversa individua, sequatur etiam multiplicatio intellectus, idest animae intellectivae. Sed dicitur immaterialis respectu actus secundi, qui est operatio: quia intelligere non expletur mediante organo corporali, et hoc contingit quia ab essentia animae non exit operatio nisi mediante virtute ejus vel potentia; unde cum habeat quasdam virtutes quae non sunt actus aliquorum organorum corporis, oportet quod quaedam operationes animae sint non mediante corpore."

²⁹ *In II Sent.*, d.17 q.2 a.1 resp.: "[...] species quae est forma intellectus possibilis, non est eadem numero in phantasmate et in subjecto; sed est similitudo illius; unde sequitur quod intellectus nullo modo nobis conjungatur, et sic per ipsum non intelligamus."

The word *continuatio* or *coniunctio* is a very unclear term used by Arabic thinkers for whom the term meant a union between the separate intellect and man. Aquinas tried to use this expression in different contexts.³⁰ Avempace was one of the major exponents of the theory of *conjunction* which should be looked upon as the philosophical answer to the question of human salvation. Through the conjunction with the intellect the soul achieves perfection and ultimate happiness.³¹ The conjunction (*ittisāl*) is a union with the divine realm, a union that reveals the eternal and innermost aspects of the universe.³² Through this union or knowledge one is completed as a human being, and in this completion the ultimate human end, happiness, is achieved. Avempace was most concerned with the ultimate human objective, the intellectual or philosophical ideal, which in turn is in conjunction with the agent intellect through grasping the universals. It is impossible to get to know the separated, immaterial substances *per seipsas*, nor through *intellectus agens*, nor through *intellectus possibilis*. It is characteristic of the possible intellect to imagine or create the similarities of material things which arose by the abstraction from phantasms. For this reason the intellect cognizes material rather than immaterial substances.³³ The possible intellect is not a power grounded in a corporeal organ, but, on the other hand, a human being understands through the possible intellect because it is located in the essence of the human soul which is the form of the human being.³⁴

Aquinas' understanding of the intellect springs from the argument that human soul is a form of the body. For Aquinas it is necessary to accept the individuality of the intellect because it has further important consequences, in ethical sphere for example (such as individual reward

³⁰ Klubertanz (1952: 166–173); the cogitative sense (the particular reason) is produced by a kind of “continuation” of the spirit into sensibility (“the mind [...] is continued in the sense powers”), *De Ver.* q. 10, a. 5, corp.; see *ibid.* ad 2 and ad 4. See also *De Ver.* q. 2, a. 6, corp.

³¹ Altmann (1965: 47–87).

³² M. Fakhry, *Philosophy, dogma and the impact of Greek thought in Islam*, Variorum, Aldershot, 1994, pp. 193–207.

³³ *ST* I, q.88 a.1 ad 2: “Intellectus autem noster possibilis, secundum statum praesentis vitae, est natus informari similitudinibus rerum materialium a phantasmatibus abstractis: et ideo cognoscit magis materialia quam substantias immateriales.”

³⁴ *Q. disp. de anima*. q.2 resp.

and punishment),³⁵ and in the arguments for the immortality and incorruptibility of the soul.

The second question connected with Aquinas' criticism of Avempace concerns the problem whether it is the ultimate happiness of man to understand the separate substances.³⁶ Aquinas opposes to the opinion that the human soul in the present state of life can understand immaterial substances in themselves.³⁷

Avempace held that man can, through the pursuit of the speculative sciences, come to the understanding of separate substances from the things he knows through phantasms.³⁸ He maintained an opinion that *quiddities* of sensible things adequately reveal immaterial *quiddities*.³⁹ According to him, the object of the intellect is *quod quid est*, therefore the intellect is from its nature oriented to understand the *quidditas* of the thing.⁴⁰ Avempace's intention was to study the speculative sciences, and hence at first to form abstract generalisations, one higher than the other, and then to ascend to the cognition of pure intelligence.

Aquinas is very sceptical about this opinion and he strictly follows Aristotle's emphasis on senses and phantasms. The only things a human being can know in the speculative sciences are those that are grounded within the range of naturally known principles. These principles are revealed to man by the light of the agent intellect, which is something natural to him. This light makes things known to man only to the extent that it renders images actually intelligible; since in this consists the activity of the agent intellect. Because the images are taken from the senses, the knowledge of the principles begins in the senses. Consequently, the principles do not carry man beyond the

³⁵ *De Spiritualibus*, a.9: "De intellectu ergo possibili Averroes in Commento III. De Anima posuit quod esset quaedam substantia separata secundum esse a corporibus hominum, sed quod continuaretur nobiscum per phantasmata; et iterum quod esset unus intellectus possibilis omnium. Quod autem haec positio sit contraria fidei facile est videre: tollit enim praemia et poenas futurae vitae. Sed ostendendum est hanc positionem esse secundum se impossibilem per vera principia philosophiae."

³⁶ *In Boeth. De Trin.* q.6, a.4. resp.; *SCG*, III, c.41; *ST*, I, q.88 a.1–2.

³⁷ *ST*, I, q.88 a.1.; *De potentia*, q.7, a.5, ad 14.: "Illud est ultimum cognitionis humanae de Deo quod sciat se Deum nescire." *In Boethii De trinitate*, q.1, a.2, ad 1.: "Dicimur in fine nostrae cognitionis Deum tamquam ignotum cognoscere."

³⁸ *SCG*, III, c.41: "Avempace namque posuit quod per studium speculativarum scientiarum possumus, ex his intellectis quae per phantasmata cognoscimus, pervenire ad intelligendas substantias separatas."

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ For details of Avempace's theory of the understanding of separate substances, see Crawford (1953: 490); Hoping (1997: 330–336).

world which he can know from the objects grasped by the senses. Therefore, for Aquinas, man cannot know the *essence* of the separate substances through which he grasps from the senses and phantasms. Through sensible things man can arrive at the knowledge of the *existence* of the separate substances. The speculative sciences enable him to know only about the *existence* of these entities and some of their characteristics; for example, that they are intellectual or incorruptible. For Aquinas the conclusion of this subject is clear: man cannot know the *quiddity* of separate substances through the speculative sciences.⁴¹

Avempace follows Aristotle in the opinion that the ultimate happiness of a human person is to understand the highest cause and the separate substances in an act of wisdom, and wisdom is a speculative science. But for Aquinas the first principles known in speculative sciences cannot transcend beyond senses to quidditative knowledge of the separate substances or God. This is not, however, a reason for the frustration of the human being; it is only the result of the philosophical proof that *quiddities* abstracted from material things do not point to those of separated substances.⁴²

When Aquinas deals with this topic, he stresses the meaning of human happiness, which is twofold. One is the imperfect happiness found in this life, which consists in contemplating the separate substances through the habit of wisdom. This kind of contemplation is imperfect, because it is possible only in the present life, and is not such that man can know the quiddity of separate substances. Perfect happiness comes when man sees God himself through his essence and the separate substances do not come through a speculative science, but through “the light of glory”.⁴³ In several works, Aquinas tries to explain that a human being in the present state of life is endowed with the principles by which he can *prepare* for the perfect knowledge of separate substances, but not with principles by which he can reach it. Man is inclined to his ultimate end; he cannot reach it by his nature, but only by grace.⁴⁴ Aquinas is somewhat ambiguous, however, because in some places he is critical towards such opinions which support the claims that during the human life (*in praesentis vitae*) the intellect cannot reach the knowledge of immaterial substances. What helps to clarify the knowledge of these substances is metaphorical language which,

⁴¹ *In Boeth. De Trin.* q.6, a.4. resp.; *ST*, I, q.88 a.2.

⁴² *Q. disp. de Anima*, q.16 ad 6.

⁴³ *In Boeth. De Trin.* q.6, a.4. ad 3.

⁴⁴ *De Veritate*, q.22 a.7.

however, does not unveil God's substance by mere human psychic faculties.

Aquinas' idea about light and illumination makes the knowledge of immaterial substances possible. Human intellect needs light (*lumen*) to see God's substance; this light illuminates (*illuminatio*) him in such a way as to increase his intellectual powers. This light appears by a kind of supernatural encroachment (*dispositio supernaturalis*). When a thing is edified to something that transcends this thing's nature, then it must be modified by an ability that is above its nature. The natural power of the intellect is not enough to see God and therefore a higher power must interfere from God's grace (*ex divina gratia*). Only by the encroachment of God's grace can the intellect see God's substance directly and in radiance. Similarly to the natural light (*lumen corporale*) that makes things transparent and visible, so the created light (*lumen creatum*) enables the intellect to become a more competent faculty. Aquinas does not state, however, that in this way the illuminated intellect already learns about God's substance.⁴⁵ Light provides power *ex divina gratia*, and therefore man does not learn due to *similitudines* and phantasms but he learns *per lumen gloriae* which causes the intellect to succumb to divine influence (*deiformitate*). Intellect, which succumbs more and more to the light of glory, sees God's substance in a more perfect way. A more perfect vision of God depends especially on love (*caritate*).⁴⁶ Where there is love, there is desire, too (*desiderium*). And desire makes man eligible and prepared for the acceptance of the desired thing. For Aquinas the presence of love means a more perfect vision of God and greater bliss.⁴⁷

For Aquinas God's substance is the basis of all intellectual knowledge. It is out of the sphere of the intellect, however, because it transcends the intellectual powers. Therefore the intellect needs to be strengthened by God's light to be able to see God's substance.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *ST*, I, q.12, art.5, resp.

⁴⁶ *ST*, I, q.12, art.5, ad 1: "[...] quod lumen creatum est necessarium ad videndum Dei essentiam, non quod per hoc lumen Dei essentia intelligibilis fiat"; *SCG*, III, c.53.

⁴⁷ *ST* I, q.12, art.6, resp.: "[...] intellectus plus participans de lumine gloriae, perfectius Deum videbit. Plus autem participabit de lumine gloriae, qui plus habet de caritate: quia ubi est maior caritas, ibi est maius desiderium; et desiderium quodammodo facit desiderantem aptum et paratum ad susceptionem desiderati. Unde qui plus habebit de caritate, perfectius Deum videbit, et beator erit."

⁴⁸ *SCG*, III c.54: "Divina enim substantia non sic est extra facultatem creati intellectus quasi aliquid omnino extraneum ab ipso, sicut est sonus a visu, vel substantia immaterialis a sensu, nam divina substantia est primum intelligibile, et totius intellec-

Aquinas argues that man needs some kind of phantasms to understand things which are divinely revealed to man through the influence of higher substances.⁴⁹ Aquinas follows Pseudo-Dionysius' opinion that divine light is clothed in a number of sacred veils⁵⁰ and that it appears in the world due to phantasms that are necessary for man because they turn us towards higher substances. The consequence of such a theory is Aquinas' emphasis on sensitivity as something which is not accidental. Aquinas is against the cognition of separated substances through the speculative sciences but he points to a different way of cognition of the higher substances — through illumination and by God's grace.

As a conclusion, I would like to stress that it is necessary to see Aquinas' criticism of Avempace in the context of the application and

tualis cognitionis principium: sed est extra facultatem intellectus creati sicut excedens virtutem eius, sicut excellentia sensibilibus sunt extra facultatem sensus. unde et philosophus in ii metaphys., dicit quod intellectus noster se habet ad rerum manifestissima sicut oculus noctuae ad lucem solis. indiget igitur confortari intellectus creatus aliquo divino lumine ad hoc quod divinam essentiam videre possit. per quod prima ratio solvitur.”

⁴⁹ *Q. disp. de Anima*, q.15 resp. According to Avicenna, physical substances succumb to the influence of separated substances. Therefore, the reason of fascination, a kind of vertiginousness (*fascinatio*), is strong imagination which causes changes of the physical substance. *SCG*, II, cap.103, *De Malo*, q.16 a.9 ad 13, *ST*, I, q.117 a.3 ad 2: “[...] fascinationis causam assignavit Avicenna ex hoc, quod materia corporalis nata est obedire spirituali substantiae magis quam contrariis agentibus in natura. Et ideo quando anima fuerit fortis in sua imaginatione, corporalis materia immutatur secundum eam. Et hanc dicit esse causam oculi fascinantis.” For more detailed arguments on this topic and for a criticism of Avicenna, see *Super ad Galatas*, cap. 3, lectio 1. Marcos F. Manzanedo writes: “De la fascinación habla ya Avicenna. Fascinación significa estrictamente hechizo o encantamiento maléfico por medio de la mirada. Pero en sentido amplio equivale a cualquier engaño o ilusión visual. Según Avicenna, la fascinación se debe a que la materia corporal obedece a la sustancia intelectual más que a las cualidades activas y pasivas de la naturaleza” (*La Imaginación y la Memoria según Santo Tomás (Studia Universitatis S. Thomae in Urbe 9)*, Herder, Roma, 1978, p. 123). Avicenna's ideas in his treatise *De anima* were essential in many ways and the systematic analysis of the conditions of psychosomatic changes had its inherent place for the understanding of magic and demonology. See D.N. Hasse, *Avicenna's De anima in the Latin West (1160–1300)*, The Warburg Institute, London, 1997, pp. 1–12. Cf. Zambelli's thoughts: “Nella piena scolastica latina l'idea di un'immaginazione transitiva o psicosomatica viene più esplicitamente connessa con l'analisi della magia naturale o demoniaca” (P. Zambelli, *L'ambigua natura della magia: Filosofi, streghe, riti nel Rinascimento*, Marsilio Editori, Venezia, 1996, p. 65); a more elaborate work on these issues is F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1958, p. 119.

⁵⁰ *Q. disp. de Anima*, q.15 resp.

interpretation of Aristotle's opinions in *De anima*, which were critically evaluated by Averroes (and this was very substantial for Aquinas), and also of Aquinas' own metaphysical presuppositions, which are momentous for the understanding of man's place in the universe.

Aquinas' criticism of Avempace shows that his refutation of the identity of imagination and potential intellect points to the principal argument of Aquinas, which is that Avempace's theory is not adequate to explain human cognition and the difference between the human and the animal.

The second conclusion is that human intellect can never attain absolute identity with the divine form through *coniunctio*, and can never achieve cognition of separate substances through speculative sciences. Aquinas shows the principal openness of the human being to the world, human natural limitations, possibilities and finally his humility and esteem for the created world.

I believe that it is not possible to deliver a final verdict because each of these two philosophers proceed from different philosophical presuppositions. Rather, in considering the subtle Medieval discussions about various aspects of Aristotle's philosophical opinions we can see that "[...] in the history of philosophy the distortions of commentators can be more fruitful than fidelity."⁵¹

⁵¹ The quote is by Richard Sorabji in M.W.F. Stone, 'The soul's relation to the body: Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant and the Parisian Debate on Monopsychism', in T. Crane (ed.), *History of the mind-body problem*, Routledge, New York, 2000, p. 34.