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WORDS, TEXTS AND CONCEPTS CRUISING THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

*Studies on the sources, contents and influences of
Islamic civilization and Arabic philosophy and science*

*Dedicated to Gerhard Endress
on his sixty-fifth birthday*

edited by

R. ARNZEN and J. THIELMANN



SEPARATE MATERIAL INTELLECT IN AVERROES' MATURE PHILOSOPHY

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The doctrine of the material intellect promulgated by Averroes (1126-1198) in his latest works is surely the teaching for which he has been most maligned both in the medieval era and in modern times. In medieval times Duns Scotus spoke of "That accursed Averroes" whose "fantastic conception, intelligible neither to himself nor to others, assumes the intellective part of man to be a sort of separate substance united to man through the medium of sense images."¹ In modern times, as even-handed a scholar as Herbert Davidson has felt compelled to conclude that Averroes, who regarded himself as following as closely as possible in the very steps of Aristotle, "transforms the material intellect into something wholly un-Aristotelian" as "a hybrid entity that his master [Aristotle] would have found extremely odd."² Nevertheless, it is precisely his teaching on the nature of the material intellect which provided principles needed for the orderly completion of his mature philosophical thought on the nature of First Philosophy as metaphysics, on God and the hierarchy of intellects moving the heavens, and on the role of religion in the lives of individuals and in the political state. What is more, the examination of that doctrine and its ramifications in these areas sheds considerable light on his philosophical methodology and the end which he saw philosophy ultimately serving. This article expounds the importance of the doctrine of the material intellect in Averroes' mature teachings with

¹ JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Quaestiones in Lib. IV Sententiarum (Ordinatio)* Dist. 43, q. 2, in: *Joannis Duns Scoti, Doctoris Subtilis, Ordinis Minorum, Opera Omnia, Quae hucusque reperiri potuerunt*. Collecta, recognita, notis, scholiis, & commentariis illustrata, a PP. Hibernis, Collegii Romani S. Isidori Professoribus [...], 12 vols, Lugduni: Sumptibus Laurentii Durand, 1639, vol. X, p. 22; translated by Allan WOLTER, *Duns Scotus. Philosophical Writings*, Edinburgh — London, 1962, p. 146-147, and quoted by Irving M. COPI and Carl COHEN, *Introduction to Logic*, 8th ed., New York — London, 1990, p. 127. I also cite this in Richard C. TAYLOR, *Averroes on Psychology and the Principles of Metaphysics*, in: *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36 (1998), p. 507-523.

² Herbert A. DAVIDSON, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect. Their cosmologies, theories of the active intellect, and theories of human intellect*, Oxford, 1992, p. 356 and 354 respectively.

a view to showing, *pace* Duns Scotus and Davidson, how very intelligible and how very Aristotelian that doctrine is when considered in context.

Ibn Bājja had initiated an Andalusian tradition of philosophical commentaries on the works of Aristotle following in the model of al-Fārābī to a considerable degree. In the case of Averroes, his own commentaries were in three forms, epitomizing *Short Commentaries*, paraphrasing *Middle Commentaries*, and extensive *Long Commentaries*, this latter containing the complete text of Aristotle together with detailed section by section commentary drawing on all available sources from the Greek and Arabic traditions. The issue of the material intellect is found in all three sorts of Averroes' commentaries on the *De Anima* of Aristotle and is also taken up in considerable detail in at least five other works extant today in Arabic, Hebrew or Latin³.

The problem Averroes faced from the start was that of providing a coherent account of human intellectual understanding sufficient to satisfy the needs of Aristotle's many teachings in his *De Anima*. There Aristotle had raised the issue of whether the intellect might be a different sort of soul or power than sensation. Working from the presumption of *Posterior Analytics* II 19 that the human soul is constituted to come to have knowledge of things of the world, Aristotle went on to give a sketch of what this must entail psychologically and epistemologically in *De Anima* 3.4. This power of the soul must be first and foremost recep-

³ These works include (1) the *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction* (cf. Kalman P. BLAND, *The Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect by Ibn Rushd with the Commentary of Moses Narboni*. A critical edition and annotated translation [Moreshet, *Studies in Jewish History, Literature and Thought*, 7], New York, 1982); — (2) *Epistle #1 On Conjunction* and (3) *Epistle #2 On Conjunction* (cf. Marc GEOFFROY et Carlos STEEL [eds and trs], *Averroès. La béatitude de l'âme*. Éditions, traductions annotées et études doctrinales et historiques [...] par M. Geoffroy et C. Steel [*Sic et non*], Paris, 2001. This work contains two short treatises by Averroes "On Conjunction with the Agent Intellect" translated into French with notes by Marc Geoffroy. These translations are based on Geoffroy's readings of the manuscripts used by J. HERCZ [ed. and tr.], *Drei Abhandlungen über die Conjunction des separaten Intellekts mit dem Menschen*, von Averroes [Vater und Sohn], aus dem Arabischen übersetzt von Samuel Ibn Tibbon, Berlin, 1869); — (4) *De separatione primi principii* (cf. Carlos STEEL and Guy GULDENTOPS, *An Unknown Treatise of Averroes Against the Avicennians on the First Cause*. Edition and Translation, in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* [formerly *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*] 64 [1997], p. 86-135); and — (5) the *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander* (cf. Mauro ZONTA, *La tradizione guideo-araba ed ebraica del De intellectu di Alessandro di Afrodisia e il testo originale del Commento di Averroè*, in: *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Rivista della Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere dell'Università di Venezia* 40.3 [2001] [*Serie orientale*, 32], p. 17-35, Arabic text of Averroes' Commentary on the *De Intellectu* of Alexander, p. 27-34.

tive of the forms of things with a noetic identity free of interfering distortion caused by mixture with the body or by mixture with any pre-existing nature in this power itself. Before it thinks it is nothing but this receptivity enabling it to think and judge, that is, to classify particulars in terms of universals. In this way the human receptive disposition for knowledge, later called material intellect by Alexander of Aphrodisias⁴, accounts for the development of human intellectual understanding in an individual knower in terms of a reception of forms based on sense and subsequent to perception. This is a grasp of essence in a way which prescind from the particularity of the thing so as to enable the predication of universals indicative of knowledge. Yet just how can this power of understanding belong to individual human beings and not itself be a body or a power in a body?

AVERROES' EARLY TEACHINGS ON THE MATERIAL INTELLECT

Averroes' first effort in grappling with the issue of the material intellect was in his *Short Commentary* (or *Epitome*, *Mukhtaṣar*) on the *De Anima* (ca. 1158-60)⁵. There he holds that forms from the world are received as

A Hebrew translation of this work was edited by Herbert DAVIDSON, *Averroes' Commentary on the De Intellectu Attributed to Alexander* [in Hebrew] in: *Sefer ha-yovel li-Shelomo Pines, bi-melot lo shemonim shanah* [Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume], 2 vols [Mehke-*re Yerushalayim be-mahashevet Yi'sra'el*, 7,9], Jerusalem 1988-1990, vol. I, p. 205-217).

⁴ The term ὑλικὸς νοῦς "material intellect", is coined by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his Paraphrase of the *De Anima*. See ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS, *Praeter commentaria Scripta minora. De Anima cum mantissa*, ed. Ivo BRUNS (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, Supplementum Aristotelicum*, II, 1), Berlin, 1887, p. 81.24; and Athanasios P. FOTINIS, *The De Anima of Alexander of Aphrodisias*. A translation and commentary, Washington, D.C., 1980, p. 105. The Arabic text is not extant. A new English translation is in preparation by Victor Caston.

⁵ References are to the 1985 Arabic edition: *Epitome de anima*, edidit Salvador GÓMEZ NOGALES, (*Corpus Commentarium Averrois in Aristotelem*, vol. A, 31), Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas Instituto "Miguel Asín", Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1985. (Another edition has been prepared by Ahmed Fouad EL-AHWANI, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Nafs li-Abī l-Walīd ibn Rushd wa-arba' rasā'il*, Cairo, 1950). Gómez Nogales has also translated his edition as *La Psicología de Averroes. Comentario al libro sobre el alma de Aristóteles*, trad. Salvador GÓMEZ NOGALES, Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1987. On the editions and translations of this work, see p. 360-361 of Gerhard ENDRESS, *Averrois Opera: A Bibliography of Editions and Contributions to the Text*, in: *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition: Sources, Constitution, and Reception of the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126-1198)*, *Proceedings of the Fourth Symposium Averroicum* (Cologne, 1996), ed. G. ENDRESS and J. A. AERTSEN with the assist. of K. BRAUN, Leiden — Boston — Köln, 1999, p. 339-381. Regarding the dating of Averroes' works, I generally follow Jamāl al-Dīn AL-'ALAWĪ, *al-Matn al-Rushdī: Madkhal li-qirā'a jadīda*, Casablanca, 1986; and Miguel CRUZ HERNÁNDEZ, *Abū'l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Rushd (Averroes): Vida, Obra, Pensamiento, Influencia*, Córdoba, 1986 (1997²).

intentions (*ma'ānin*) in the external senses and internal powers and ultimately in the imagination where they come to be by a receptivity different from that of physical organs. In contrast to what is the case for sense organs, particular apprehended forms as intentions need not replace contraries when received into the imagination. Thus, "The imaginative soul is distinguished by the fact that it does not need an organic instrument for its activity."⁶ The content of intellectual understanding is found in the experience of the individual human knower in such a way that the truth of the intelligible is causally grounded in the object in the world via the imagined form⁷. Yet these intentions and the worldly forms are only potentially intelligible until the intentions are acted upon by a separate and immaterial power which is *per se* intellectual. That power is the agent intellect which exists separately external to the soul but is required for the initial existence of the material intellect and for the actualization of the material intellect with intelligibles in human knowing. On this account, the agent intellect is responsible for the existence of the material intellect as "the disposition which is in the forms of the imagination for receiving intelligibles" which he names "the first material intellect."⁸

In this understanding of the material intellect as a disposition having the forms of the imagination as its subject in the *Short Commentary* Averroes follows the lead of Ibn Bājja with confidence enough to characterize that account as true (*ḥaqq*) and demonstrative (*burhānīya*) (p. 214) in the original version of that work. While close to the view of Alexander of Aphrodisias who held that the receptivity he called material intellect is a perishable disposition in each human being ceasing at the individual's death, Ibn Bājja instead held that this is but a stage on the way toward the individual person's higher immortal intellectual fulfillment ultimately to be found in conjoining with the separate and unique agent intellect. Averroes, however, does not follow Ibn Bājja's notion of the soul's assent to the level of a higher unity⁹. Although in his

⁶ *Epitome de an.*, ed. GÓMEZ NOGALES (see n. 5), p. 108.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 116-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁹ "[T]he philosopher must perform numerous [particular] spiritual acts — but not for their own sake — and perform all the intellectual acts for their own sake: the corporeal acts enable him to exist as a human, the [particular] spiritual acts render him more noble, and the intellectual acts render him divine and virtuous. The man of wisdom is therefore necessarily a man who is virtuous and divine. Of every kind of activity, he takes up the best only. He shares with every class of men the best states that characterize them. But he stands alone as the one who performs the most excellent and noblest of actions. When he achieves the final end — that is, when he intellects simple essential intellects, which are mentioned in the *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul*, and *On Sense and the Sensible* — he then

*Long Commentary on the De Anima*¹⁰ written ca. 1186 Averroes makes a point of stressing — surely with Ibn Bājja in mind — that conjoining with the agent intellect is not the end but rather the means to the end of intellectual understanding {501}, here in the *Short Commentary* Averroes refrains from following Ibn Bājja on the issue of personal immortality and the higher existence of the individual intellect¹¹. Instead Averroes is content to embrace the notion that the material intellect is an immaterial disposition, not of the body, but of the imagination. This approach appears to have the two benefits of keeping the material intellect's immaterial receptivity as a power sufficiently distant from body and from the imagination as a bodily power and of meeting the need for the material intellect to belong to the individual human knower¹². Both

becomes one of those intellects. It would be right to call him simply divine. He will be free from the moral sensible qualities, as well as from the high [particular] spiritual qualities: it will be fitting to describe him as a pure divinity." IBN BĀJJA, *Tadbīr al-Mutawakkhid*, in: *Rasā'il Ibn Bājja al-ilāhiya (Opera Metaphysica)*, ḥaqqāqahā wa-qaddama lahā Majīd FAKHRI (*al-Dirāsāt wa-l-nuṣūṣ al-falsafiyya*, 1), Bayrūt, 1991², p. 79-80. Translated by Lawrence BERMAN, *The Governance of the Solitary*, in: Ralph LERNER and Muhsin MAHDI (eds), *Medieval Political Philosophy*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1983³, p. 131-2.

¹⁰ *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima libros*, rec. F. Stuart CRAWFORD (*Corpus Commentarium Averrois in Aristotelem*, versionum latinarum vol. 6,1. *The Mediaeval Academy of America*, publ. no. 59) Cambridge, MA, 1953. Throughout this article citations of the doctrines of this work will be given in {brackets} indicating the page numbers of the Latin edition of Crawford. Only fragments of the Arabic are extant. See A. BEN CHEHIDA [IBN SHAHĪDA], *Iktishāf al-naṣṣ al-'arabī li-ahamm ajzā' al-sharḥ al-kabīr li-Kitāb al-Nafs ta'līf Abī l-Walīd ibn Rushd*, in: *Al-Ḥayāt al-Thaqāfiyya* 35 (1985), p. 14-48.

¹¹ "Averroes may at first have been unsure about the possibility of the human intellect's having the active intellect as an object of thought and conjoining with it.... [T]he body of his *Epitome of Aristotle's De anima* broaches the subject without committing itself to one side or the other." DAVIDSON, *Alfarabi* (see n. 2), p. 323.

¹² This view is also found in *Averroes' Short Commentary on the Parva Naturalia*: *Averrois Cordubensis Compendia librorum Aristotelis qui Parva naturalia vocantur*, textum arabicum rec. et adnotationibus illustravit Henricus BLUMBERG (*Corpus Commentarium Averrois in Aristotelem*, versionum arabicarum vol. 7. *The Mediaeval Academy of America*, publ. no. 80), Cambridge, MA, 1972, p. 79.7-12; AVERROES, *Epitome of «Parva Naturalia»*, translated from the Original Arabic and the Hebrew and Latin Versions [...] by Harry BLUMBERG (*Corpus Commentarium Averrois in Aristotelem*, versio anglica, vol. 7. *The Mediaeval Academy of America*, publ. no. 71), Cambridge, MA, 1961, p. 46; *Averrois Cordubensis Compendia librorum Aristotelis qui Parva naturalia vocantur*, rec. Aemilia L. SHIELDS adiuvante H. BLUMBERG (*Corpus Commentarium Averrois in Aristotelem*, versionum latinarum vol. 7. *The Mediaeval Academy of America*, publ. no. 54), Cambridge, MA, 1949, p. 109-110; his *Epistle #2 On Conjunction* (ed. M. GEOFFROY et C. STEEL [see n. 3]), p. 225-226; his *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction* (ed. K. P. BLAND [see n. 3]), p. 28; and *De separatione primi principii* (ed. C. STEEL and G. GULDENTOPS [see n. 3]), p. 112-120, particularly 118. In a later revised version of the *Short Commentary on the De Anima* Averroes rejects this account complaining of having been misled by Ibn Bājja and sends his readers to his *Long Commentary on the De Anima* for a proper account. See *Epitome de an.*, ed. GÓMEZ NOGALES (see n. 5), p. 128.

of those benefits will be eschewed by Averroes in later works, the former in his *Middle Commentary* and the latter in his *Long Commentary*.

In his *Middle Commentary*, (completed prior to the *Long Commentary*, perhaps as early as 1181¹³), Averroes has come to reconsider the requisite nature of the material intellect in reflecting on the nature of the subject in which this disposition, the material intellect, inheres. As he now sees it, the material intellect must be

completely unmixed with any material form. For, this faculty, which is called the material intellect, if it is to think all things — that is, receive the forms of all things — cannot be mixed with any one form; that is, it cannot be mixed with the subject in which it is found, as the other material faculties are.

If the rational faculty were mixed with any form, then one of two things would have to occur: either the form of the subject with which it was mixed would impede the forms this faculty would receive, or it would change them — that is, it would change the form being received. Were this so, the forms of things would not exist in the intellect as they really are — that is, the forms existing in the intellect would be changed into forms different from the actual forms. If, therefore, the nature of the intellect is to receive the forms of things which have retained their natures, it is necessary that it be a faculty unmixed with any form whatsoever.¹⁴

This issue of the unmixed nature of the material intellect together with the necessity of it still belonging to the human individual who is said to have knowledge led Averroes to stress the immaterial nature of this receptive power and to associate it more directly with the activity of the agent intellect. On this view, the material intellect is essentially founded in the agent intellect and its activities upon human souls. He does this by holding that material intellect first is given as a remote disposition to human individuals at birth¹⁵ by the agent intellect which itself is *per se* immaterial and immortal. Then later in life through the efforts of individuals at knowing the agent intellect is again present to provide the proximate disposition of receptivity and to cause its actualization in the reception of intelligibles. In this way Averroes satisfied the need for the material intellect to be “unmixed” with the body or a bodily activity and yet for it to belong to the individual.

¹³ Argument for this view is set forth in the introduction to my forthcoming translation of the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*.

¹⁴ Averroës' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*, a critical edition of the Arabic text with English translation, notes, and introduction by A. L. IVRY, Provo, UT, 2002, p 109. Note that I have changed Ivry's rendering of *al-'aql al-hayulānī* from “hylic intellect” to “material intellect.”

¹⁵ Aristotle's assertion of τὸν νοῦν... θύραθεν, “reason (or intellect) entering from outside”, at *Generation of Animals* II 2, 736 b 27, was well known.

The philosophical principle at work here is that it is not necessary that intellectual dispositions be in or united to their subject after the manner of a corporeal accident or substance. Indeed, such a uniting would hinder or preclude intellectual understanding. The model for this is the existence of celestial bodies, souls and intellects¹⁶. For Averroes the eternally existing and moving celestial bodies are related to their souls in such a way that the celestial soul belongs to and is naturally associated with — or even can be said to be “in” — its corresponding celestial body but not in such a way that the body is a subject in which the soul has its existence. Using this model, Averroes writes that the material intellect is

nothing other than disposition only — that is, the potential intellect is solely disposition, not something in which disposition exists. Although this disposition is in a subject, since it is not mixed with the subject, the subject does not serve as an intellect in potentiality. This is the opposite of what obtains with other material faculties in which the subject is a substance — either composite (that is, something composed of form and matter) or simple (the first matter).¹⁷

Averroes in this way rejected his own earlier account as well as that of Ibn Bājja regarding the nature of the material intellect and regarding its relationship to human knowers, but not the earlier view that material intellect is an individual intellectual power belonging to each particular human being. In the *Middle Commentary* the material intellect is immaterial in nature and not related to its subject in such a way as to make a composition with the subject in the way substantial or accidental being involves composition. And, although the material intellect brought about by the agent intellect in both its stages, Averroes went on to explain that the material intellect has its own nature distinct from that of the agent intellect because the material intellect is able to know privations by being aware of itself in a disposition of privation.

Proof that it is not purely a disposition is had in that we find that the material intellect apprehends this disposition devoid of the forms and apprehends the forms, making it possible thereby to think privations — that is,

¹⁶ See GEOFFROY et STEEL, *La béatitude* (see n. 3), p. 64-65, 71 ff. On Averroes' cosmology see Gerhard ENDRESS, *Averroes' De caelo: Ibn Rushd's cosmology in his commentaries on Aristotle's On the Heaven*, in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 5 (1995), p. 9-49, David B. TWETTEN, *Averroes on the Prime Mover Proved in the Physics*, in: *Viator. Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 26 (1995), p. 107-134, R. C. TAYLOR, *Averroes on Psychology* (see n. 1), and also *Averroes' De Substantia Orbis*, critical edition of the Hebrew text with English translation and commentary by Arthur HYMAN (*Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi, Opera Averrois. Medieval Academy Books*, 96), Cambridge, MA — Jerusalem, 1986.

¹⁷ *Averroës' Middle Commentary*, ed. and transl. IVRY (see n. 14), p. 110.

by virtue of apprehending its essence devoid of forms. This being the case, necessarily, that which apprehends this disposition and the forms which obtain in it is other than the disposition.¹⁸

In this way the material intellect is distinguished in substance from the one shared agent intellect in having its own nature and in being understood as a plurality in accord with the number of human beings¹⁹. Such a view of the material intellect might seem naturally to raise the question of the possibility of a persisting existence after the perishing of the body, but Averroes does not pursue that issue in the *Middle Commentary*²⁰. However, he does reflect on the alternative of considering the material intellect as another separate substance — a view close to his final view in the *Long Commentary* — and rejects it as absurd because it would require an entity with incompatible characteristics: on the one hand, predisposition and potency for intelligibles, and on the other, the actuality of a separate intellectual substance completely actual in its being. What is more, this would require that humans be rational first through separate immaterial intellectual substance and then develop this to its full actuality only through temporal activities of a generable and corruptible sort²¹. Thus, the *Middle Commentary* rejects the *Short Commentary*'s conception of the material intellect as a receptive disposition attached to the forms of the imagination and establishes that each human being has an immaterial receptive disposition for intelligibles called the material intellect in such a way that it belongs to each human being without being in a body or in a bodily power as in a subject. In this fashion Averroes preserves the ability of the material intellect to receive the intelligible essences of things in an immaterial way fully free of distortion by being composed with a subject.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111-112: "It has thus been explained that the material intellect is something composed of the disposition found in us and of an intellect conjoined to this disposition. As conjoined to the disposition, it is a disposed intellect, not an intellect in act; though, as not conjoined to this disposition, it is an intellect in act; while, in itself, this intellect is the Agent Intellect, the existence of which will be shown later. As conjoined to this disposition, it is necessarily an intellect in potentiality which cannot think itself but which can think other than itself (that is, material things), while, as not conjoined to the disposition, it is necessarily an intellect in act which thinks itself and not that which is here (that is, it does not think material things)."

²⁰ See Ivry's remarks on this in the introduction, *ibid.*, p. xxvi-xxxvii.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 111. "In general, disposition is a distinguishing characteristic of matter, and it is impossible for disposition to be found in one genus and its subject in another — that is, that which is disposed to receive something intelligible must be an intellect." *Ibid.*, p. 110.

AVERROES' *LONG COMMENTARY ON THE DE ANIMA*:
HIS FINAL POSITION ON THE MATERIAL INTELLECT

In his *Long Commentary* (ca. 1190) Averroes comes to reject the common doctrine of the two earlier *Commentaries* that there is a plurality of material intellects in accord with the number of human beings. Instead he embraces and expounds at length his 'infamous' final position on the material intellect which he had raised as a possibility but without substantive discussion in a short work called *Epistle #1 On Conjunction*. There he wrote, "it seems, on the issue of this predisposition, that it is a substance one in number for all human beings in itself, but many by accident, which is not the case for material forms."²² For Averroes this conception of the material intellect does not arise merely because there should be one material intellect to correspond to one agent intellect nor merely because of an adherence to the model of celestial souls and bodies (where each celestial body is itself a species and has a unique mover) employed in the *Middle Commentary* to explain how a mover could be associated with its subject without being in composition with it. Rather, what drive Averroes to expound his doctrine of a single, shared material intellect for all humankind in the *Long Commentary* are considerations both philosophical and thoroughly Aristotelian of the metaphysical and epistemological natures of intelligibles themselves and the subject in which they come to exist.

Aside from a few short passages of some relevance in the first two Books of the *Long Commentary*, the chief locus of Averroes' argumentation on the material intellect is to be found in Book 3 which begins with what in modern editions is Book 3, chapter 4, of Aristotle's *De Anima*. This is a novel approach compared with his two earlier *Commentaries* and serves to underscore the importance of the doctrine of intellect and its ramifications as the chief focus of Averroes' Book 3. A literal commentary accompanied by a complete text of Aristotle's *De Anima*, the *Long Commentary* is substantially controlled by the order of Aristotle's presentation, something far from problematic for Averroes since he claims to be following and completing Aristotle's philosophical psychology. And as he saw it, the part of Aristotle's account which required completion was that of the material intellect, the power by which the understanding of intelligibles, knowledge properly so called, can

²² GEOFFROY et STEEL, *La béatitude* (see n. 3), p. 210.

take place in human beings existing in bodies²³. Nevertheless, Book 3 contains three sets of comments which are tantamount to extended essays on the material intellect and its intelligibles (Comment 5), the agent and material intellects as separately existing immaterial substances (Comments 18-20), and knowing and conjoining with these separate intellects (Comment 36). The account which follows draws primarily on these sets of comments.

Book 3 of the *Long Commentary* opens with Aristotle's consideration of the part of the soul which thinks and understands and the issue of just how the apprehension of intelligibles, conceptualization (*taṣawwur bi-l-'aql, formare per intellectum*), takes place. While conceptualizing is similar to sense perception as apprehensive, it differs insofar as conceptualizing involves a pure receptivity open to all intelligibles altogether unlike sense perception's receptivity which both is delimited by its subject, the sense organ, and involves change. In the case of the senses, change takes place in a particular organ, is apprehended by a particular sense power, and yields a particular intention. Intellect, however, has no bodily organ, undergoes no change, and has no interfering formal structure of its own, all of which follow from the nature of the object which comes to be realized in it in the intellectual understanding of intelligibles. This is clearly stated at the start of Comment 5:

[T]hat part of the soul which is called the material intellect has no nature and being by which it is constituted inasmuch as it is material except the nature of possibility, since it is devoid of all material and intelligible forms.... [T]he definition of the material intellect, therefore, is that which is in potency all the intentions of universal material forms and is not any of the beings in act before it understands any of them. {387}

The material intellect is also unlike prime matter because of differences in their potencies, prime matter being a potency for "individual and particular forms" resulting in a composite being which is a determinate particular, but material intellect being an apprehensive potency for "all the intentions {388} of the universal material forms."

²³ Aristotle writes at *De Anima* III 7, 431 b 17-19: "In every case the mind which is actively thinking is the objects which it thinks. Whether it is possible for it while not existing separate from spatial conditions to think anything that is separate, or not, we must consider later." Averroes, as others in the Arabic and Greek traditions, noted that Aristotle never supplied the promised account and took it upon himself to complete it with his own doctrine of the material intellect which he understood to be consequent upon Aristotelian principles and so most likely what Aristotle had intended. See the *Long Commentary*, ed. CRAWFORD (see n. 10), {479} ff. and {399}.

Averroes' understanding of the nature of a determinate particular entity (*al-mushār ilayhi*, *aliquid hoc*) is central to his consideration of the nature of the material intellect and its intelligibles. Corresponding to Aristotle's use of τόδε τι at *De Anima* 402 a 24, for Averroes this term denotes a determinate particular individual which is a member of a species. Given that the role of the material intellect is to understand intentions of universal forms, that is, intelligibles in act which denote species, it is evident that the material intellect cannot be properly said to understand determinate particular individuals — members of species — which are intelligibles only in potency. That is, the material intellect "must receive forms by a mode of reception other than that by which those matters receive the forms whose contraction by matter is the determination of prime matter in them." {388} There is no way for the material intellect to receive determinate particulars — that is, to know with the meaning of intellectual apprehension and conceptualization — and at the same time be the very entity it is posited to be in the process of intellectual understanding.

This understanding of what it is to be a determinate particular entity (*al-mushār ilayhi*, *aliquid hoc*) when joined with the intrinsic nature of the material intellect as described above results in the exclusion of direct knowledge of particulars as such on the part of the material intellect. But this notion of the determinate particular entity is also applicable to the consideration of the nature of the material intellect. It must itself not be a determinate particular entity simply because if it were so, then whatever were received into it would be contracted to the determinate particularity of its subject. That is, any received intelligible in act would be particularized by the subject into which it is received — the material intellect — and thereby become an intelligible in potency only. The result is that the material intellect cannot be a determinate particular entity and thereby cannot be possessed individually by any particular human being. Yet given that the receptive power called the material intellect must exist for human intellectual understanding to take place, the only alternative is that the material intellect is itself a unique species, a single entity fully identical with its species and not a plurality in its own nature. Consequently, for Averroes the metaphysics of intelligibles dictates that there be one material intellect shared by all human beings, precisely as *Epistle #1 On Conjunction* had suggested as possible. Just how this is possible while at the same time different individual human beings realize differing levels of intellectual understanding must also be explained by Averroes.

Averroes is himself well aware that human intellectual experience does not entail that when one person understands something, every other person understands it, although it perhaps appears that such a thing must result if the material intellect is in itself one, as just argued, and shared by all human beings. He is equally aware that it cannot be the case that one and the same intelligible in act exists in *Zayd* as such and also in *ʿAmr* as such. Not only would this be precluded by the problem of the contraction of the intelligible in act into particularity taking place as a result of the particularity of its subject, it would also entail the existence of multiple intelligibles in act (essences) of the very same intelligible in act (essence). That would then generate an infinite regress in accord with the Third Man Argument with the positing of another intelligible in act over those and so forth to infinity. {411} On this argument it is clear that the metaphysical natures of the intelligible in act and the subject or subjects into which it can be received and retain its nature, require a theory by which the intelligibles are in a single, shared material intellect and yet somehow generated by and functionally present in particular determinate human individuals. The theory which Averroes sets forth to meet this challenge is that of the two subjects.

Averroes' understanding of Aristotle's account of sense perception provides him with a model for understanding how apprehension can involve two distinct subjects.

Conceptualizing, as Aristotle says, is just as apprehending by sense. But apprehending by sense is something which is actualized through two subjects, one the subject in virtue of which the sense is true (this is the thing sensed outside the soul) and the other the subject in virtue of which the sense is an existing form (this is the first actuality of the sense organ). Hence, the intelligibles in act must also have two subjects, one the subject in virtue of which they are true, namely, the forms which are true images, and the other that in virtue of which the intelligibles are among the beings in the world, and this latter is the material intellect. {400}

The subject in virtue of which intelligibles are true is the image provided by a human individual subsequent to sense perception. The needed procuring of an intention suitable for presentation to the separate intellects for abstraction takes place when the particular image or intention formed in the internal sense powers is denuded of non-essential characteristics through the activity of the cogitative power and deposited in memory.²⁴ This intention, still the intentional form of a particular exist-

²⁴ "That individual intention is what the cogitative power discerns from the imagined form and refines from the things which were conjoined with it from those common and

ing in the human brain, is the presented before the separate intellects for abstraction. In this way, the subject by which the intelligible in act is true consists of the image in the internal sense powers of the individual human knower who has derived the content of the intelligible from sensory experience of the world. And since the metaphysics of intelligibles in act does not permit the reception of the intelligible in act into a determinate particular human being as explained above, that intelligible in act comes into existence, that is, is "among the beings in the world," in the material intellect as its subject of existence.

Averroes follows Aristotle in using the metaphor of light to explain this abstraction and the roles of the two intellects when he likens the material intellect to the transparent medium and the agent intellect to the light which in Aristotelian physics moves the medium from being transparent in potency to being transparent in act.

[T]he relation of the material forms {411} to [the material intellect] is [the same as] the relation of color to the transparent [medium]. For just as light is the actuality of the transparent [medium], so the agent intellect is the actuality of the material [intellect]. Just as the transparent [medium] is not moved by color and does not receive it except when there is light, so too that intellect does not receive the intelligibles which are here except insofar as it is actualized through that [agent] intellect and illuminated by it. Just as light makes color in potency to be in act in such a way that it can move the transparent [medium], so the agent intellect makes the intentions in potency to be intelligible in act in such a way that the material intellect receives them. This, then, is how the material intellect and the agent [intellect] should be understood. {410-11}

Abstraction or conceptualization, then, is genuinely based on human perceptual experience for its content and does not rely on illumination or emanation of intelligible content from a transcendent entity. The role of the agent intellect in this account is solely to explain the way that intentions which are intelligible in potency by its intellectual 'light' come to be intelligibles in act. With its light it makes actual what was presented to it as potential, namely the intentions, and then it impresses these on the material intellect in the same act since these intentions now intelligible in act require a subject for their existence.

proper sensibles, {226} and it deposits it in the memory. This same [individual intention] is what the imaginative [power] apprehends, but the imaginative [power] apprehends it as conjoined to those sensibles, although its apprehension is more spiritual."

"For, just as the subject of vision moving [vision], which is color, moves it only when color is made to be in act through the presence of light after it was in potency, so too the imagined intentions move the material intellect only when the intelligibles are made to be in act after they were in potency." {401}.

The metaphysical consideration of the very natures of intelligibles as such, the nature of the material intellect as subject into which they are received, and the nature of the agent intellect require that there be three distinct substances involved: the human subject, the material intellect, and the agent intellect. Nevertheless, Averroes holds that these activities must be understood as taking place in us.

For just as sight is not moved by colors except when they are in act, which is not realized unless light is present since it is what draws them from potency into act, so too the imagined intentions do not move the material intellect except when the intelligibles are in act, because it is not actualized by these unless something else is present, namely, the intellect in act. It was necessary to ascribe these two activities to the soul in us, namely, to receive the intelligible and to make it, although the agent and the recipient are eternal substances, on account of the fact that these two activities are reduced to our will, namely, to abstract intelligibles and to understand them. For to abstract is nothing other than to make imagined intentions intelligible in act after they were [intelligible] in potency. But to understand is nothing other than to receive these intentions. For when we found the same thing, namely, the imagined intentions, is transferred in its being from one order into another, we said that this must be from an agent cause and a recipient cause. The recipient, however, is the material [intellect] and the agent is [the intellect] which brings [this] about. {439}

The human experience of the attainment of knowledge through personal effort at study and reflection reveals the existence of the powers of these separately existing intellects present in the soul for use by individual knowers. And while they may appear to be one intellect when they are acting in concert in the formation of intelligibles in act insofar as there is one actuality of the recipient material intellect from the agent intellect {450-1}, still they are two distinct substances. The nature of the agent intellect is such that it is actuality of activity in its substance and that it "understands nothing of the things which are here" {444}. The nature of the material intellect, in contrast, is such as to receive the forms of things here in the world as intentions intelligible in act when they have been "transferred" in "being from one order into another."

Averroes also describes the implementation of these intellectual powers of the soul as a conjoining (*ittiṣāl*) with separate intellect and as the attainment of our "final form." As already indicated, knowing or conjoining is an activity which is initiated by human individuals in the employment of the cogitative power which organizes intentions and distills from them a particular intention denuded of extraneous characteristics²⁵.

²⁵ "[W]ithout the imaginative power and the cogitative [power] the intellect which is called material understands nothing." {450}.

Deposited into memory, this is what the individual presents before the powers of material intellect and agent intellect for abstraction. That abstraction is a conjoining with the intellects for the sake of generating knowledge and is called "acquired intellect" (*al-'aql al-mustafād, intellectus adeptus*). Subsequent to that, what is left in the individual human being is a facility for recalling knowledge once attained called "theoretical intellect" (*al-'aql al-naẓarī, intellectus speculativus*), that is, a facility in the individual to conjoin again with the separate material intellect where the intelligibles in act exist in a subject. This may be described as the locus of theoretical intelligibles in us, but should not be taken in the sense that the intelligibles in act are literally present in individual human beings since that is metaphysically impossible on the account given above. Note that this facility for conjoining or recollecting previously attained knowledge is something real in the human individual thanks only to its previous conjoining with the material intellect and agent intellect. This explains how it is that when one person knows something, another does not, even though there is but one shared material intellect for all humankind²⁶. By the use of imagination, cogitation and memory in abstractive conjoining with the separate intellects, there results an abiding link called "intellect in a positive disposition" (*al-'aql bi-l-malaka, intellectus in habitu*) had only by those who have provided the content of abstraction and who have thereby been conjoined with the separate intellects in the process of the generation of intelligibles²⁷.

The conjoining which takes place is no mystical moment but merely the explanation of the epistemological process of forming and grasping intelligibles in knowledge.

[W]hen the theoretical intelligibles are conjoined with us through forms of the imagination and the agent intellect is conjoined with the theoretical intelligibles (for that which apprehends [theoretical intelligibles] is the

²⁶ Regarding the cogitative power and the new, central role it plays in the *Long Commentary*, Richard C. TAYLOR, *Remarks on Cogitatio in Averroes' Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima Libros*, in: *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition* (see n. 5), p. 217-255; ID., *Averroes' Epistemology and Its Critique by Aquinas*, in: *Thomistic Papers VII. Medieval Masters: Essays in memory of Msgr. E. A. Synan*, ed. by R. E. HOUSER, Houston, TX, 1999, p. 147-177; and ID., *Cogitatio, Cogitativus and Cogitare: Remarks on the Cogitative Power in Averroes*, in: Jacqueline HAMESSE, Carlos STEEL (eds), *L'élaboration du vocabulaire philosophique au Moyen Âge*. Actes du colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve et Leuven, 12-14 sept. 1998 [...], Louvain-la-Neuve — Leuven, 2000, p. 111-146.

²⁷ Averroes' *Commentary on the De Intellectu of Alexander* also asserts that "the material intellect is one power shared by individual souls" and that the theoretical intelligibles are "in its essence ungenerable and incorruptible." M. ZONTA, *La tradizione* (see n. 3), p. 29.

same, namely, the material intellect), it is necessary that the agent intellect be coupled with us through the conjoining of the theoretical intelligibles. {500}

As indicated earlier, however, this conjoining with separate intellect is not the end or final cause of human existence. That end is rather the same as found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* X 7 and its account of ultimate human happiness, intellectual fulfillment to the extent possible for humans within the limits of their nature and species. Conjoining is the means to the end of human intellectual perfection. {501} That end is achieved when separate intellect comes to be "form for us" and "our final form." {444-5, 485-6, 490} This conjoining is not properly the generation of intelligibles by the agent intellect in individual human beings as subjects for the metaphysical reasons cited earlier nor is it merely the generation of intelligibles in the material intellect. The principle which must be observed here is this: "because that in virtue of which something carries out its proper activity is the form, while we carry out {500} our proper activity in virtue of the agent intellect, it is necessary that the agent intellect be form in us." This is simply for the reason already given above: we are "able to generate intelligibles when we wish" {500} since "these two activities are reduced to our will. " {439}

THE IMPORTANCE OF AVERROES' FINAL POSITION ON THE MATERIAL INTELLECT FOR METAPHYSICS AND PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY, RELIGION AND POLITICS

That his mature teachings on the material intellect play an essential role in his metaphysical thought is stressed by Averroes in both his *Long Commentary on the De Anima* and in his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (ca. 1190). In the former he writes,

The metaphysician gets from it the substance of his subject. For here [in the science of the soul] it will be explained that the separate forms are intelligences and also many other things concerning the knowledge of states consequent upon intelligence considered as intelligence and intellect. {5}

This is so for Averroes because the detailed investigation into the nature of human knowing yields the doctrine of the material intellect as an entity which has the nature of receptive potency for intelligibles and at the same time must be an intellect which is a unique species of entity since it is the subject for intelligibles in act. At *Metaphysics* VI 1, 1026 a

27-32, Aristotle argued that First Philosophy would have to be physics unless there could be shown some existent which is not body or consequent upon body. For Averroes, this is shown in physics with its account of celestial motion, as he explains in his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*:

[I]t is fully clear that these celestial bodies are alive and that among the powers of soul they have only intellect and the power of desire, i.e. [intellect] which causes motion in place. This is perhaps evident from what I say, for it has been explained in the eighth book of the *Physics* that what causes motion belonging to the celestial bodies is not in matter and is a separate form. And it was explained in the *De Anima* that the separate forms are intellect. So, consequently, this mover is an intellect and is a mover insofar as it is an agent of motion and insofar as it is the end of motion.²⁸

Physics, with its demonstration of the existence of an unmoved mover as form separate from matter, provided the account sufficient to show that there is a First Philosophy beyond physics, namely metaphysics. But physics as natural science is limited to consideration of bodies and their attributes. It remains, then, for another science to explain the natures of immaterial entities. And it is philosophical psychology which provides the needed insight by its arguments about the nature of intelligibles, the separate intellects and human knowing. This doctrine shows that separate intellect in the cases of the agent intellect and the material intellect must be separate form free of the determinate particularity of body. This Averroes takes as evidence that the separate form shown to exist in physics must be intellect.

There is still more for metaphysics to be had from the doctrine of the material intellect for the establishment of the natures of God and the higher intellects moving the heavens. In view of the movements of the heavens, physics and cosmology are able to posit these unmoved movers in a hierarchy, but that hierarchy is not *per se* but *per accidens*. The hierarchy is based on the movement these cause and is not explained on the

²⁸ Averroès: *Tafsīr Mā ba'd al-Tabī'at* («Grand Commentaire» de la Métaphysique), texte arabe inédit, établi par Maurice BOUYGES, 3 vols (*Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum*, série arabe, 5-7), [vol. 4:] *Notice*, Beirut, 1938-1952, Book Lām c. 36, p. 1593-4. My translation. Cf. *Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Libri XIII cum Averrois Cordubensis in eosdem commentariis et epitome* in: *Aristotelis Opera Cum Averrois Commentariis*, Venetiis Apud Iunctas, 1574, vol. VIII, Liber XII c. 36: fol. 318rv F-G. These Latin texts are cited here according to the 1962 Minerva (Frankfurt am Main) reprint. See also: *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics*, a translation with introduction of Ibn Rushd's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book Lām by Charles GENEQUAND (*Islamic Philosophy and Theology. Texts and studies*, 1), Leiden, 1984, p. 149.

basis of the very natures of these immaterial intellects²⁹. Here again Averroes finds a central role for his doctrine of the material intellect which established that apparently incompatible characteristics, potency and immaterial intellectual nature, can exist in a single entity³⁰. This potency thereby allows for an understanding of the *per se* nature of separate intellects sufficient to explain their plurality and hierarchy. In the *Long Commentary on the De Anima* he explicitly notes this:

One should hold that it [*scil.* the material intellect] is a fourth kind of being. For just as sensible being is divided into form and matter, so too intelligible being must be divided into things similar to these two, namely, into something similar to form and into something similar to matter. This is [something] necessarily present in every separate intelligence which understands something else. And if not, then there would be no multiplicity {410} in separate forms. It was already explained in First Philosophy that there is no form free of potency without qualification except the First Form which understands nothing outside itself. Its being is its quiddity. Other forms, however, are in some way different in quiddity and being. {409-10}

Well aware of the extreme to which Aristotelian epistemological and metaphysical issues have compelled him, Averroes in this way finds in his new doctrine of the material intellect not only the needed account for philosophical psychology but also the grounds for the metaphysics explaining the hierarchy of intellects³¹.

The doctrine of the material intellect as well has important ramifications for religion and politics in the thought of Averroes. Assuming sound his famous remarks in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* that his "books of demonstration"³² contain accounts which are not merely per-

²⁹ Cf. Harry A. Wolfson, *The Plurality of Immovable Movers in Aristotle and Averroes*, in: *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 (1958), p. 233-253.

³⁰ "If it were not for this genus of beings [*scil.* separate intellects] which we have come to know in the science of the soul, we could not understand multiplicity in separate things, to the extent that, unless we know here the nature of the intellect, we cannot know that the separate moving powers ought to be intellects." {410} Cf. R. C. Taylor, *Averroes on Psychology* (see n. 1).

³¹ The potency found in separate intellects below the First Cause is that of a reference in their being to the First Cause as their ultimate final cause. This issue is taken up at greater length in my 1998 presentation at the Cordoba Conference in honor of the anniversary of the death of Averroes. It is forthcoming as *Averroes' Philosophical Conception of Separate Intellect and God* in a collection of papers from the conference to be published in Paris in 2004.

³² AVERROËS, *Tahafot at-tahafot. L'incohérence de l'incohérence*, ed. Maurice BOUYGES (*Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum*, série arabe, 3), Beirut, 1930, p. 427-428; transl. Simon VAN DEN BERGH, *Averroes' Tahafut Al-Tahafut. (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, 2 vols (*E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series*, N. S., 19), London, 1954, repr. 1969, vol. II, p. 257-8.

suasive in nature but demonstrative and necessary, it is evident that he in fact holds that there is no immortality for individual human beings. What belongs *per se* to each human being as particular determinate entity consists in the body, its accidents and the internal powers of the soul. The intellects by which individuals can be called knowers are included in the definition of a human being insofar as there is a natural relationship of affinity and cooperation but this relationship is a functional one, not one whereby intellect is *per se* present in the individual human being. Rather, the immortality promised in the Law must in fact be understood to refer to the eternally persisting existence of the separate material intellect in which all human beings may have the opportunity to share. That sharing depends on proper moral conduct since theoretical excellence requires virtue and excellence of character. As he says in his *Commentary on the Republic* (ca. 1195),

[T]his kind of perfection—i.e. the moral, is laid down [in relation to] theoretical perfection as a preparatory rank, without which the attainment of the end is impossible. Hence, this perfection is thought to be the ultimate end because of its proximity to the ultimate end. It appears from this, then, that the human perfections are... all for the sake of theoretical perfection.³³

Religious doctrines promising individuals *post mortem* rewards or punishments cannot be taken at face value by the demonstrative philosopher in search of truth³⁴. The ultimate end of human beings as rational and mortal entities spelled out in the *Long Commentary on the De Anima* yields the understanding that the value of religious doctrines is to be determined by their efficacy in “the instruction of the masses generally”³⁵ in the sound moral life which the end of theoretical perfection requires. The end of religion on this account is political, namely to work to provide the moral society in which theoretical perfection of human intel-

³³ Ralph LERNER (transl.), *Averroes on Plato's "Republic"*, transl. with introd. and notes by R. L., Ithaca — London, 1974, p. 92 (p. 72.29-34 of the Hebrew edition by E. I. J. Rosenthal).

³⁴ There is no doctrine of ‘Double Truth’ here or anywhere in the thought of Averroes. See my ‘Truth does not contradict truth’: *Averroes and the Unity of Truth*, in: *Topoi* 19 (2000), p. 3-16. On the issue of personal immortality, see Richard C. TAYLOR, *Personal Immortality in Averroes' Mature Philosophical Psychology*, in: *Documenti e studi sulla traduzione filosofica medievale* 9 (1998), p. 87-110. Regarding Averroes' treatment of religious propositions, see ID., *Averroes' Philosophical Analysis of Religious Propositions*, in: Jan A. AERTSEN and Andreas SPEER (eds), *What is Philosophy in the Middle Ages? [...] Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Medieval Philosophy of the S.I.E.P.M., 25-30 August 1997 in Erfurt*, 2 vols (*Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, 26), Berlin — New York, 1998, p. 888-894.

³⁵ AVERROËS, *Tahafot at-tahafot* (see n. 32), p. 582; VAN DEN BERGH, *Averroes' Tahafot* (see n. 32), vol. II, p. 360.

lect may be pursued. As such, it is not for the philosopher to undermine that means to the end. As Averroes says in his *Incoherence of the Incoherence*,

[I]t belongs to the necessary excellence of a man of learning that he should not despise the doctrines in which he has been brought up, and that he should explain them in the fairest way, and that he should understand that the aim of these doctrines lies in their universal character, not in their particularity, and that, if he expresses a doubt concerning the religious principles in which he has been brought up, or explains them in a way contradictory to the prophets and turns away from their path, he merits more than anyone else that the term unbeliever should be applied to him, and he is liable to the penalty for unbelief in the religion in which he has been brought up.³⁶

The thought of Averroes played no major role in the development of Arabic philosophy in the Islamic world in the Middle Ages. However, it was important for the development of Jewish and Christian philosophical and theological thought³⁷. In the Arab world interest in his thought was stirred by works of European thinkers such as Renan³⁸ in the Nineteenth Century and Averroes soon became the object of study in Arabic even though many of his most important philosophical works such as his *Long Commentary on the Physics* and *Long Commentary on the De Anima* as well as other writings were available only in Latin or Hebrew. This led to a distorted and partial view of this philosopher, just as the Medieval Latin West's partial view of him was distorted by the unavailability of important dialectical works such as his *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, his *Decisive Treatise*, and others³⁹. In recent years thanks to new editions, translations and studies, it has become possible to gain a more comprehensive, coherent and accurate picture of Averroes and his philosophy. In that vein the present article has shown that Averroes' doctrine of the material intellect is by no means a "fantastic conception, intelligible neither to himself nor to others" but rather a carefully and

³⁶ AVERROËS, *Tahâfut at-tahâfut* (see n. 32), p. 583; VAN DEN BERGH, *Averroes' Tahâfut* (see n. 32), vol. II, p. 360. Averroes' philosophical conception of God and of religion is discussed in my article *Averroes: God and the Nobel Lie*, forthcoming in *Laudemus Viros Gloriosos: Essays in Medieval Philosophy in Honor of Armand Augustine Maurer, c.s.b.*, ed. R. E. HOUSER (Notre Dame, in: University of Notre Dame Press).

³⁷ For a brief account of this, see DAVIDSON, *Alfarabi* (see n. 2), p. 298-314.

³⁸ ERNEST RENAN, *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, in: *Œuvres complètes de Ernest Renan*, édition définitive établie par Henriette PSICHARI, 10 vols, Paris, 1845-1892, vol. III (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, Éditeurs, 1852).

³⁹ ANKE VON KÜGELGEN, *Averroes und die arabische Moderne. Ansätze zu einer Neubegründung des Rationalismus im Islam (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, 19)*, Leiden — New York — Köln, 1994.

thoughtfully argued doctrine. And, while it has to be acknowledged that his teaching on the material intellect is not found as such in Aristotle, it is also true that it is set forth and developed from principles not “wholly un-Aristotelian” but thoroughly Aristotelian in character. What is more, his metaphysical and epistemological principles can be seen to ground the coherence of his ethical, political and religious thought.