

Individual Agency in Bonaventure's Account of Natural Knowledge

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INTRODUCTION

In his recent work, Alain de Libera calls attention to the historico-philosophical question as to when the “modern” subject emerged, rejecting Heidegger’s claim that Descartes was its inventor, and illustrating the need to look to the Middle Ages for its origins.¹ This paper is influenced by De Libera’s project of uncovering the emergence of the “modern” subject in the Middle Ages. However, I focus on the question of how Bonaventure, representing a systematic, mature Franciscan view, develops the logical foundation for an important aspect of the independently thinking self through his interpretation of the Aristotelian account of cognition received from Arabic philosophy.² I analyze Bonaventure’s synthesis of the Augustinian premise 1) that God is the illuminator of the human intellect with 2) his distinctive interpretation of Aristotle’s agent and possible intellects, focusing on the special care the Seraphic doctor takes to preserve the premise 3) that the human soul is genuinely free in its cognitive acts. My focus on Bonaventure seeks to clarify an important part of the pre-Thomistic, Franciscan concern to explain with some rigour how the individual is the agent of his own thought.

1. In the first volume of his *Archéologie du sujet*, Alain de Libera deconstructs Heidegger’s claim that Descartes was the inventor of the modern subject, and traces the birth of the subject to a prolonged encounter between the Trinitarian concept of the person and the ancient philosophical notion of the *hypokemenon*. De Libera argues that the “modern” subject was born not from Descartes, but from a thirteenth-century integration of an Aristotelian attributivist model of the human soul with a perichoretic model derived from Augustine’s theology (Alain de Libera, *Archéologie du sujet*, 2 vols, bibliothèque d’histoire de la philosophie [Paris: Vrin, 2007]). For an introductory synopsis of his argument, see Alain de Libera, “When Did the Modern Subject Emerge?” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82.2 (2008): 181–220.

2. Within his treatment of the metaphysical structure of soul, de Libera is interested primarily in Bonaventure’s arguments for the circumincession and consubstantiality of the powers of the soul with *mens* (de Libera, *Archéologie du sujet*, vol. 1, 311–29). My present analysis focuses instead on the question of how the spontaneity of the individual’s thought, which is fundamentally important to the thinking individual’s independence, is formulated within the Franciscan response to the Arabic Aristotle.

I begin my analysis with question 4 of the *De Scientia Christi* to show how Bonaventure makes his account of Divine illumination in intellectual cognition compatible with his claim that there is genuine individual agency in intellectual cognition. I emphasize that in natural knowledge, Bonaventure proposes a co-operation between the divine agent and the human agent: a dual agency, intended expressly to preserve the freedom of the human act of cognition. Having established this larger reconciliation between human freedom and divine illumination, in the second half of my paper I turn to Bonaventure's account of abstraction in book 2 of his *Commentaria Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*. I emphasize that this text is also guided by Bonaventure's concern to account for human agency in intellectual cognition in its interpretation of Aristotle's agent intellect as the created light of the human intellect. Specifically, the goal of preserving individual agency in thought compels Bonaventure to reject the particular Aristotelian logic of activity that requires the agent intellect to constantly possess its objects. I suggest that Bonaventure replaces this version of activity with Averroes' conception of the agent intellect's activity as found in the *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima Libros*. This critical reorientation allows Bonaventure to interpret Aristotle's agent intellect as a power of the individual soul, a light that does not intrinsically possess the content of thought, but can nevertheless spontaneously initiate cognition by abstracting intellectual *species* at will.

DE SCIENTIA CHRISTI, QUESTION 4

Question 4 of Bonaventure's *De Scientia Christi* gives a detailed account of the wayfarer's knowing, that is, knowing by the temporal and fallen mind. Bonaventure's first concern is to explain how the wayfarer can attain certain knowledge even despite the impediments of his fallen condition, both in simple knowing (knowing individual *species*) and in complex knowing (knowing through demonstration). In question 4's *Respondeo* Bonaventure maintains that certainty can be acquired only if the knower is infallible and the object known is unchanging. The created mind and created objects, by their very status as created, cannot provide the ontological stability required for certainty.³ It follows that certain knowledge can only be obtained in the divine *ratio*, since only God exists eternally, self-sufficiently, and therefore in

3. Bonaventure, *De Scientia Christi*, q. 4 in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 5 (Ad Claras Aquas: Quaracchi, 1891), 23b (hereafter cited as *DSC q4*). For example, the above reference is "*DSC q4* 5.23b." Translations of this text are taken from Zachary Hayes, *Saint Bonaventure's Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 1992), modified by me where necessary. Bonaventure presents the same argument in his sermon, "Dominica Vigesima Secunda Post Pentecosten," in *Sancti Bonaventurae Sermones Dominicales*, ed. J. Bougerol (Grottaferrata: Quaracchi, 1977), 467–68, where the influence on this claim of Augustine's *De Magistro* is more evident.

a way that necessarily does not change (*DSC q4 5.24a*). However, while on the one hand certain knowledge must in some way be in God's eternity, the wayfarer has only limited access to the divine Word. Pre-lapsarian man was impeded from knowing the divine *ratio* only in part (*ex parte*), presumably because of his existence in time (*DSC q4 5.24a*). However, the wayfarer's mode of knowing is impeded further than that of the Adamic soul by the guilt of original sin, which causes the wayfarer's knowing in the divine reasons to be not just partial, but also obscure (*in aenigmate*) (*DSC q4 5.24a*). His doubly-impaired mode of knowing radically limits the wayfarer's access to the divine *ratio*, and as a consequence he is unable to rely exclusively on God's Word for knowledge. He must, in combination with superior illumination, have recourse to created reasons, which are in fact the intellectual objects properly suited to the temporal-fallen condition:⁴

Together with these eternal reasons [the soul] attains to the likenesses of things abstracted from the sense image. These are the proper and distinct principles of knowledge, and without them the light of the eternal reason is insufficient of itself to produce knowledge as long as the soul is in this wayfaring state.⁵

Just as the uncreated *ratio* is above the soul, the created reasons are below it and are known by the soul's abstracting the *species* of the created object from matter, which permits a knowledge by *similitudo*.⁶ The wayfarer knows

4. Unlike the fallen mind, Bonaventure's Adam had a full knowledge of universal *species* without having had to abstract them. Therefore, his knowledge of created things could not be perfected in the sense of acquiring new *species*, but it could be improved by the sensation of particulars, and in its quickness, which was somewhat slowed even by Adam's non-mortal body (2 *Sent.* d. 23, art. 2, q. 1 [CS 2.538a]). Similarly, the angels know by universal *species* given to them at their creation, and do not acquire *species* through abstraction. However, the angels come to know new individual things by combining these pre-known universals within themselves in new ways. This combining, which they must do in consultation with the particular objects known, allows them to perfect their knowledge without the reception of new *species* (2 *Sent.* d. 3, pt. 2, art. 2, q. 1 [CS 2.120a–b]).

5. *DSC q4 5.24b*. "Cum his attingit rerum similitudines abstractas a phantasmate tanquam proprias et distinctas cognoscendi rationes, sine quibus non sufficit sibi ad cognoscendum lumen rationis aeternae, quamdiu est in statu viae." (I have capitalized the first letter of my quotations when they begin in the middle of an original Latin sentence, and have added a period to my quotations when they stop before the end of an original Latin sentence.) This statement can also be taken as Bonaventure's rejection of the claim that his illuminationism is an ontologism. For a clear treatment of the problem of ontologism in Bonaventure, see Steven Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, vol. 1, Studies in the History of Christian Thought, v. 98 (Boston: Brill, 2001), 200–22.

6. At 2 *Sent.* d. 17, art. 1, q. 2 (CS 2.415a), Bonaventure argues that abstraction is required because the soul cannot be united to the object in the object's material particularity (*secundum veritatem*), and must therefore know the object only according to its abstracted similitude (*secundum similitudinem*). Cf. Aquinas *ST* I q. 76 art. 2.

created things, then, by a combination of an inferior knowing that provides the content of natural knowledge, and a superior illumination that provides both the required stability and the required infallibility: “For certain cognition the eternal reason is necessarily required as a regulating and motive *ratio*, not indeed as the only *ratio* nor in its full clarity, but seen by us wayfarers only in part, and together with the created *ratio*.”⁷ The question is, then, how the fallen intellect is constituted to allow it simultaneous access to superior and inferior sources.

To answer this, Bonaventure borrows from Augustine in two respects. On one hand, he adopts the Augustinian account of the soul’s two faces: “The rational spirit has a higher and a lower part,”⁸ the former directed upward to God’s *ratio*, and the latter directed downward to created things. These operate in their different directions at the same time to provide the kind of certainty permitted in natural knowledge. On the other hand, Bonaventure borrows the Augustinian claim that the soul is *by nature* an *imago dei*, which is the higher part of the intellect’s two aspects.⁹ This latter claim is important because it answers the question of how a fallen soul could have access to the divine mind at all. Bonaventure holds that despite the wayfarer’s two-fold impairment, his intellect’s link to the divine *ratio* belongs to him in a way that cannot be severed by sin: “Since the nature of the image is never absent

7. DSC q4 5.23b. “*Ad certitudinalem cognitionem necessario requiritur ratio aeterna ut regulans et ratio motiva, non quidem ut sola et in sua omnimoda claritate, sed cum ratione creata, et ut ex parte a nobis contuita secundum statum viae.*”

8. DSC q4 5.24a. “*Spiritus rationalis habeat superiorem portionem rationis et inferiorem.*” For Bonaventure’s argument that the two faces of the soul constitute a single power, see 2 *Sent.* d. 24, pt. 1, art. 2, q. 2 (CS 2.564a–b).

9. See, for instance Augustine’s *De Trinitate* 12.2.2–12.5.5. Bonaventure’s account of the intellect’s higher aspect as the *imago dei* is likely drawn from Augustine’s *De Trinitate* 12.7.10: “*Sicut de natura humanae mentis diximus quia et si tota contempletur ueritatem, imago dei est, et cum ex ea distribuitur aliquid et quadam intentione deriuatur ad actionem rerum temporalium, nihilominus ex qua parte conspectam consulit ueritatem imago dei est; ex qua uero intenditur in agenda inferiora non est imago dei. Et quoniam quantumcumque se extenderit in id quod aeternum est tanto magis inde formatur ad imaginem dei*” (Augustine, *De Trinitate*, ed. W.J. Mountain, CCL 50 [Turnhout, 1968], 12.7 ll. 31–5). Augustine proposes in the *De Spiritu et Littera* 28.48 that the *imago dei* belongs to the soul by nature: “*Verum tamen quia non usque adeo in anima humana imago dei terrenorum affectuum labe detrita est, ut nulla in ea uelut linimenta extrema remanserint — unde merito dici possit etiam in ipsa impietate uitae suae facere aliqua legis uel sapere, si hoc est quod dictum est, quia gentes quae legem non habent, hoc est legem dei, naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt et quia huiusmodi homines ipsi sibi sunt lex et scriptum opus legis habent in cordibus suis, id est non omni modo deletum est, quod ibi per imaginem dei eum crearentur inpressum est*” (Augustine, *De Spiritu et Littera*, ed. C. F. Vrba, J. Zycha, CSEL 60 [Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1913], 202). For an account of the shift from Augustine’s early position that the *imago* was lost in the fall to his mature position that the *imago* belongs to the soul by nature, see Mary T. Clark, “Image Doctrine,” *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 440–42.

from the rational spirit, it always attains to the [eternal] reasons in some way."¹⁰ The *imago dei*, the intellect's higher part, is never entirely destroyed by the soul's sin. This establishes a minimum level of continuous access to the divine *ratio*, which Bonaventure confirms by his argument at the end of question 4 that not only the wayfarer, but even demons and damned souls, have the possibility of judging and defining with certainty (*DSC q4 5.27b*). Thus, the higher *imago dei* always allows rational judgment according to an unchanging standard, which grounds natural certainty, while the intellect's lower aspect acquires the content of thinking through abstraction, as I will outline below.¹¹

Bonaventure's response to objection 4 clarifies how the two aspects of the intellect are related while operating simultaneously. Objection 4 claims that the created light of the intellect's lower aspect is sufficient for knowledge of its proper objects.¹² Bonaventure replies to the objection, not by denying that the human intellect possesses its own created light, or that "in the natural order [the rational mind] sees everything related to intelligible things by means of a sort of incorporeal light of its own kind" (*DSC q4 5.21a*), but by maintaining that "if this [light of its own kind] is understood to refer to a created light, it does not exclude the uncreated light" (*DSC q4 5.24b*). The activity of the intellect's lower aspect, directed to created objects, includes the activity of its higher aspect directed to the divine *ratio*. In other words, not only does the *imago dei*, the intellect's higher aspect, participate the divine *ratio*, but the inferior process of abstraction also participates the divine Word by means of the higher aspect.¹³ Thus, in natural knowledge, the two gazes are aspects of a single intellectual act whose operation therefore depends on the divine.¹⁴

10. *DSC q4 5.24a*. "Secundum hoc magis vel minus eas [i.e. aeternas rationes] attingit, semper tamen aliquo modo, quia nunquam potest ab eo ratio imaginis separari."

11. Of course, this applies only to created objects of rational cognition. For an analysis of the natural knowledge of God in Bonaventure, see Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance*, vol.1, 200–22.

12. *DSC q4 5.21a*. "Augustinus, duodecimo de Trinitate: 'Credendum est, mentis intellectualis ita conditam esse naturam, ut rebus intelligibilibus naturali ordine, disponente Conditore, subiecta, sic ista videat in quadam luce sui generis incorporea, quemadmodum oculus carnis videt quae in hac corporea luce circumiacent.' Ergo videtur, quod sicut ad cognoscendum sensibilia sufficit lux naturae corporeae creata, similiter ad intelligibilia sufficiat lux spiritualis creata eiusdem generis cum potentia cognitiva."

13. For the view that Bonaventure emphasizes more heavily the contribution of divine light in knowledge in the *Collationes de donis Spiritus Sancti* and in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, see Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance*, vol. 1, 167 ff.

14. For another treatment that characterizes Bonaventure's account of illuminationism as participation in the divine light, see John R. White, "Divine Light and Human Wisdom: Transcendental Elements in Bonaventure's Illumination Theory," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 48.2 (June 2008): 175–85.

Since the act of natural knowledge as an integration of lower and higher gazes depends upon the divine light, the question naturally arises about how free the human soul is in natural cognition. Bonaventure labels the relation between the divine *ratio* and the human *ratio* a “cooperation,” namely an act that incorporates both divine and human agency: “In a work that proceeds from a creature in as far as it is an image, God cooperates as the moving cause” (*DSC q4 5.24a*). God is the moving cause of the human act in the sense that the certainty of the act is grounded in God’s stability. However, if the human intellect requires God’s action as the moving cause of the intellectual operation, exactly how is God’s action in natural knowledge different from God’s action in prophetic knowledge or spiritual rapture? The issue is whether the need for illumination in natural knowledge also inadvertently makes God, rather than the human, the agent of natural thinking. In the early part of the *Respondeo*, Bonaventure indicates that he rejects the notion that God causes intellectual cognition acting “as a special influence, such as would be involved in the case of grace” (*DSC q4 5.23a*). The problem Bonaventure has with this sort of occasionalism is that “all knowledge would be infused and none would be acquired or innate” (*DSC q4 5.23b*). Furthermore, in describing the activity of the soul’s *imago dei* in attaining the divine *ratio*, Bonaventure avoids verbs of passive reception, instead consistently using “*atingo*” to indicate that the human intellect actively reaches or touches the divine *ratio*. Bonaventure’s most direct argument in favour of human agency, however, comes in the reply to objection 13, where the Seraphic doctor returns to the question of agency in terms of human freedom. In its major premise, objection 13 opposes the freedom of the human intellect to the claim that the divine light aids human knowing: “Any power that is able to act freely has no need of external assistance in the things it does” (*DSC q4 5.21b*). Since the intellect is free, which we know because of our experience that we think at will, our intellect should not require the help of the divine light to know with certitude.¹⁵ Bonaventure answers this objection through a distinction between kinds of illumination. On the one hand, there is illumination that is “absent and distant,” and on the other hand there is illumination that is always present (*DSC q4 5.25b*). To describe the relation between the human intellect and divine illumination in *scientia*, Bonaventure adopts the latter model. The ever-present divine illumination does not compromise the freedom of whatever human act depends on it because it shines continuously

15. *DSC q4 5.21b*. The assertion of human freedom originates not only from Augustine, but is found also in Aristotle’s *De Anima*: “*Et ideo homo potest intelligere cum voluerit, sed non sentire, quia indiget sensato*” (edited in Averroes, *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima Libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford [Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953], 417b 24–6). Averroes takes up this point, although less systematically than Bonaventure, as I discuss below in the final section of the paper.

rather than intermittently. Since it shines continuously, the divine illumination can be counted as given, and can thus be used at will: "If the corporeal light were always present in the eye as the spiritual light is always present in the mind, then we would see whenever we willed to, just as we exercise our understanding when we will to do so."¹⁶ This is an important extension of the above description of the mind's natural structure. The illumination can be in the mind as always present because the *imago dei* is the mind's superior aspect by nature and therefore access to the divine *ratio* is permitted to our intellect by virtue of our intellect's intrinsic character, rather than by a superfluous or adventitious gift. In other words, the divine illuminating light is presupposed within the natural structure of the human intellect, and its natural presence allows the possibility of human freedom in *scientia*. Bonaventure's reply to objection 21 traces the two kinds of illumination introduced in his reply to objection 13 to a distinction in God's light itself. On the one hand, God's light acts as a "rational mirror," as in natural thinking. On the other hand, God's light acts as a "voluntary mirror," as in prophecy or revelation:¹⁷

Even though God is simple and one in form, nonetheless that eternal light and that exemplar represents some things, as it were, explicitly and openly while it represents other things implicitly and obscurely. The first are those things that happen according to a necessary ordering of the divine art. The latter things are those which take place according to the disposition of God's hidden will ... natural things are known in the eternal reasons by the power of judgment that is natural to reason, while supernatural and future things are known only by means of the gift of revelation from above. (*DSC q4 5.26a–b*)

Positing an objective difference within the divine light specifically permits an illumination that is freely accessed, in distinction from an illumination that is possible only by an adventitious divine gift. This expands the support for human freedom given by the claim that the divine light shines constantly. Not only is the human intellect free to use the divine light, which can be counted as given, but the divine light itself, or at least one division of it, is organized by a necessity specially accessible to natural reason.

From question 4 of the *De Scientia Christi*, I have sketched a picture of the way Bonaventure's account of the natural intellectual act interprets illumination as divine action in such a way that it allows certainty without precluding the freedom of human thinking. In this text, he also indicates that

16. *DSC q4 5.25b*. See n. 15 above.

17. Bonaventure posits this distinction in response to objection 21, which reads, "*Item, si quidquid cognoscitur videtur in rationibus aeternis; cum speculum aeternarum rationum sit voluntarium, et quod cognoscitur in speculo voluntario cognoscitur per revelationem: ergo quidquid cognoscitur secundum hoc cognoscitur modo prophetico vel revelatione*" (*DSC q4 5.22a*).

the abstraction of *species* from created things is the work of the lower of the human intellect's two gazes. However, in the *De Scientia Christi*, Bonaventure leaves the question open as to how he interprets Aristotle's agent and possible intellects, and whether his interpretation of abstraction also permits individual agency. For clarification of these important points, I therefore turn to the more thorough arguments in book 2 of his *Commentary on the Sentences* by which he establishes his interpretation of Aristotelian abstraction in greater depth.

COMMENTARY ON THE SENTENCES, BOOK 2

Within a larger analysis of the relations and distinctions between the powers of the soul, the *Respondeo* of distinction 24, part 1, article 2, question 4 articulates Bonaventure's interpretation of the agent and possible intellects, which together account for lower illumination. In what follows I trace his argument through this text to emphasize that, just as in his account of superior illumination, Bonaventure crafts his interpretation of the Aristotelian epistemology to account for the agency of the individual human intellect.

The guiding question of the text is how the distinction between the agent and possible intellects should be understood. In the *Respondeo*, the Seraphic doctor sets forth the general problem by first examining and rejecting the possibility of distinguishing the two intellects as two separate substances. Of two ways to interpret their division according to substance, Bonaventure first outlines the Avicennian position in which the agent intellect would be the tenth intelligence, while the possible intellect would be the soul joined to the body.¹⁸ Bonaventure rejects this Arab-Neoplatonic version of agent intellect, using the Augustinian reason that the human soul cannot be illuminated and thus perfected by any created substance: "For, in a correct understanding, no created substance has the power of illuminating and perfecting the soul; no, indeed, according to the mind it has to be immediately illuminated by

18. Bonaventure, *Commentaria in secundum librum Sententiarum* in *Opera Omnia* (Florentina, ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi: 1885), 2.568a (hereafter cited as *CS*). Subsequent references to this work will appear in the text above when the reference consists of the page number alone. In general, my translations of Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences* have been composed in consultation with the Franciscan archive's online Commentary Project translation, accessed 1 April 2011 at <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/bonaventura/II-Sent.html>. At a separate point in the text Bonaventure rejects Averroes' monopsychism as articulated in Averroes' *CMDA* on the grounds that 1) it destroys a coherent Christian eschatology by eliminating personal responsibility, 2) it cannot account for the diversity of individual humans, which must each possess their own complete forms (i.e., rational souls), and 3) it cannot explain the diversity of thought and affection commonly perceived among men (2 *Sent.* d. 18, art. 2, q. 1 [*CS* 2.446b–2.447a]). It is worth noting that Bonaventure does not accuse Avicenna's agent intellect, as William of Auvergne does, of interfering with Christian eschatology. However, I attribute this omission to Bonaventure's designation of Avicenna's agent intellect as logically similar to that of Augustine, whom Bonaventure would hardly accuse of heresy.

God, just as Augustine shows in many places.¹⁹ The soul cannot be perfected by a creature, but only by God himself directly. However, while Augustine provides Bonaventure with a reason for rejecting Avicenna's tenth-order agent intelligence, Bonaventure finds an Augustinian interpretation of agent and potential intellects also flawed. According to Bonaventure, Augustine proposed that God would be the agent intellect, while the human soul would be the possible intellect.²⁰ The problem is that if God should fill the role of agent intellect, human thinking would have to depend on God completely, thus eliminating from the human soul any independent power to initiate its own natural operation: "Since the power to understand was given to our soul, just as to other creatures was given the power for different acts, so although God is the chief operator in the operation of each creature, He nevertheless gave to each an active power, through which it would go out into its own special operation."²¹ On the one hand, Bonaventure attributes the role of primary operator to God. This is consistent with the *De Scientia Christi*, question 4, where the stability of the constantly-available divine light is required to provide infallibility to the knower and necessity to the object of natural knowledge. However, while God, the Participated, is in this sense the intellect's chief operator, Bonaventure also claims that the creature retains the independence to initiate the cognitive act spontaneously, a point important enough for him to maintain it even in contradiction to Augustine: "So, it should be believed indubitably that [God] gave to the human soul not only a possible intellect, but also an agent intellect, such that each [intellect] is something of the soul itself."²² Bonaventure's requirement for the creature's

19. CS 2.568 a–b. "*Nulla enim substantia creata potentiam habet illuminandi et perficiendi animam, proprie intelligendo; immo secundum mentem immediate habet a Deo illuminari, sicut in multis locis Augustinus ostendit.*"

20. CS 2.568b. In his "William of Auvergne's Rejection of the Agent Intelligence," in *Greek and Medieval Studies in Honor of Leo Sweeney*, ed. William J. Carroll and John J. Furlong (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 211–35, Roland Teske has persuasively refuted Gilson's claim that William of Auvergne held this position. Dag Nikolaus Hässe maintains that while Roger Bacon, John Pecham, Roger Marston and Vital du Four held the position that God is the agent intellect after Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences* had been completed, Bonaventure is here referring to Jean de la Rochelle and the undetermined author of *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, book 2 (Dag Nikolaus Hässe, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160–1300* [Warburg Institute, 2000], 203–23).

21. CS 2.568b. "*Cum animae nostrae data sit potentia ad intelligendum, sicut aliis creaturis data est potentia ad alios actus, sic Deus, quamvis sit principalis operans in operatione cuiuslibet creaturae, dedit tamen cuiilibet vim activam, per quam exiret in operationem propriam.*" Cf. *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, ed. Bernardinus Klumper, vol. 2 (Ad Claras Aquas: Quaracchi, 1924), 451b.

22. CS 2.568b. "*Sic credendum est indubitanter, quod animae humanae non tantummodo dederit intellectum possibilem, sed etiam agentem, ita quod uterque est aliquid ipsius animae.*" In *Sent.*, d. 7, pt. 2, art. 2, q. 1 (198a, n. 3), where Bonaventure treats the question as to whether created agents can educe substances from potency to act (as in the case of natural generation), the

capacity to initiate its own natural act spontaneously is the reason for rejecting the Avicennian and Augustinian distinctions between the agent intellect and possible intellect as differences between substances. After rejecting these two alternatives, both of which locate the agent intellect outside the human soul, Bonaventure's task in the remainder of this text is to show how the agent and possible intellects are within the soul in such a way that allows the natural independence he articulates here.

Bonaventure's general proposal is that agent and possible intellects differ as two powers (*potentiae*) within the individual soul's single, naturally complete substance.²³ To make his case, Bonaventure progressively dismisses any lingering arguments derived from the claim that agent and possible intellects are distinguished as separate substances. He replaces these with arguments showing that his proposal allows that 1) the agent intellect is capable of initiating our intellectual cognition without already possessing its objects, and 2) the agent intellect remains constantly in act even though the wayfarer's thinking is intermittent.

Bonaventure outlines his position by asserting that while the difference between the powers of agent and possible intellects is grounded in the difference between the soul's spiritual matter and its form, they do not differ as purely material and purely formal powers (CS 2.569a). That is, there is not

Quaracchi editors point to a critique of Avicenna's emanation schema in Averroes' *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* (4.7 and 7.31). In these passages, Averroes argues that positing God as the giver of all forms wrongly precludes the natural agency of individual creatures by implying that no creature has its own proper action.

23. The interpretation of the agent intellect as a power of the soul is certainly not original to Bonaventure, whose most immediate source is likely the author of *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, book 2 or Jean de la Rochelle, although John Blund was perhaps the first Latin to give this interpretation to the agent intellect. For a sketch of this history, see Leen Spruit's *Species Intellegibilis: From Perception to Knowledge*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 117–37. For a summary of Thomas' later solution, see Richard C. Taylor, "Intelligibles in Act in Averroes," in *Averroès et les Averroïsmes Juif et Latin: actes du colloque international Paris, 16–18 Juin 2005*, ed. J.B. Brenet (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), 115–16. In 2 *Sent.* d. 24, p. 1, art. 2, q. 1 (CS 2.560b–2.561a), Bonaventure investigates the relation between the soul and its powers and defends a view that falls midway between the views that 1) the powers are identical to the soul's essence and 2) the powers differ essentially as diverse accidents in the same subject. Bonaventure's middle view is that the powers share the same essence, but this common essence does not reduce them to one and the same power. While sharing the same essence, they still differ in the genus of power (*in genere potentiae*). In this analysis, Bonaventure labels memory and intellect as forces (*vires*) rather than powers because their acts are more alike than the acts of will and intellect, which do properly differ as powers. For a more protracted treatment of the relation in Bonaventure between the soul and its powers, see Sr. Mary Rachael Dady's, "The Theory of Knowledge of Saint Bonaventure," *Dissertation* (Catholic University of America, 1939), 9–11. Also see Étienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, trans. Illtyd Trethowan and Frank J. Sheed (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), 316, and Alain de Libera, as cited in n. 2 above.

an identity between the power of the possible intellect to receive intelligible *species* and the power of spiritual matter to become spiritual substance because the possible intellect is not purely passive or it would not deserve the label "intellect."²⁴ Thus, as distinctions within one substance, agent and possible intellects are distinct powers within a single intellectual operation, each having a special relation to the components of matter and form respectively, while not being reducible to these metaphysical elements:

But another way of understanding [the distinction between powers] is, as it is said, that the agent and possible intellects are two differences of the intellect, given to one substance, which reflect the composite as a whole. However the agent intellect is appropriated to form and the possible intellect to matter, since the possible intellect is ordained for receiving, the agent intellect for abstracting.²⁵

While the possible intellect has matter's tendency to receive formal *species*, it is not purely passive since it also has the power to convert itself upon the *species* existing in the phantasm. By this self-turning act, the possible intellect prepares itself to receive and also to judge the phantasm, although it can carry out these two subsequent acts of reception and judgment only with the help of the agent intellect, in whose light the judgment is made.²⁶ Conversely, the agent intellect by itself is also not sufficient for the act of cognition: "Likewise, neither is the agent intellect altogether in act."²⁷ In this interpretation of agent intellect Bonaventure proposes a logic of activity that permits him to deviate from Avicenna and Augustine, and I will explore the significance of this below. To clarify Bonaventure's claim first, however, there are two ways in which the agent intellect is less than perfectly in act. First,

24. Bonaventure's two arguments against the pure passivity of the possible intellect are as follows. First, there is a *reductio*: if the possible intellect were entirely passive, it could be posited in all things composed from matter because they all possess the 'power' of indeterminate receptivity (CS 2.568b). Secondly, an intellect cannot by definition be merely passive: "Just as the eye is not called vision, so such a power [as a purely passive possible intellect] should not be called an intellect" (ibid.). Even the potential intellect is to some degree an activity, as denoted by its label "intellect," which indicates it is like the operation of vision rather than being like the corporeal eye (ibid.). Gilson attributes Bonaventure's refusal to characterize the potential intellect as purely passive to an enduring Augustinian "respect for the spontaneity of the intellect" (Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* 331).

25. CS 2.568b–2.569a. "*Alius vero modus intelligendi est, ut dicatur, quod intellectus agens et possibilis sint duae intellectus differentiae, datae uni substantiae, quae respiciunt totum compositum. Appropriatur autem intellectus agens formae et possibilis materiae, quia intellectus possibilis ordinatur ad suscipiendum, intellectus agens ordinatur ad abstrahendum.*" Cf. *Summa Fratris Alexandri* 2.452a–b.

26. CS 2.569a. "*Nec intellectus possibilis est pure passivus; habet enim supra speciem existentem in phantasmate se convertere, et convertendo per auxilium intellectus agentis illam suscipere, et de ea iudicare.*"

27. CS 2.569a. "*Similiter nec intellectus agens est omnino in actu.*"

the agent intellect does not possess the intelligibles within itself, and thus to understand it needs to move outside itself in its act of abstraction, depending for this act on the abstracted *species*, which are distinct from it. Secondly, the act of abstracting, taken alone, is also not sufficient for cognition because the abstracted object has to be unified with the intellect for cognition to occur, and the agent intellect is not itself suited to such reception. Thus, within the act of intellectual cognition the agent intellect depends upon the possible intellect to receive the abstracted *species*, and thereby to form a union with the *species*.²⁸ The upshot of this account is that neither power is sufficient by itself for thinking, but each requires the other: “Neither does the possible understand without the agent, nor the agent without the possible.”²⁹ Bonaventure conveys the mutual dependency of agent and possible intellects by comparing their single act of intellectual cognition to the activity of the medium in vision, wherein the diaphanous receives the *species* that the light abstracts from the object.³⁰ By its act of abstracting the *species* the light is nevertheless distinguished from the diaphanous, which receives the *species* (CS 2.569a). This analogy to a medium is intended to emphasize Aristotle’s agreement that there is a single act of cognition achieved by the mutual cooperation of the agent and possible intellects, understood as two powers. Their integration within the act of cognition is so complete that Bonaventure labels it ‘conform,’ meaning that both powers are required to achieve one single act of cognition: “Thus, in the proposed, these two can be understood conformally, so that they come together for one act.”³¹ In summary, then, the agent and possible intellects are divided as two powers, but not as powers so distinct that either one can perfect its own operation without the other.³²

Since he has replaced the Avicennian or Augustinian agent intellects as fully actual separate substances that possess and constantly think all intelligibles with the notion of the agent intellect as a partially active and co-dependent power, the following questions arise: 1) precisely how can Bonaventure’s ver-

28. CS 2.569a. “*Non enim potest intelligere aliud a se, nisi adiuvetur a specie, quae abstracta a phantasmate intellectui habet uniri.*”

29. CS 2.569a. “*Nec possibilis intelligit sine agente, nec agens sine possibili.*”

30. Herbert Davidson argues that the emphasis on the medium in the vision analogy, rather than on the eye, is original to Averroes (Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992] 317–18). Also see n. 73 below.

31. CS 2.569a. “*Sic et in proposito conformiter potest intelligi, ita ad unum actum haec duo concurrere.*”

32. CS 2.571a. “*Cum cogitamus de intellectu agente et possibili, non debemus cogitare quasi de duabus substantiis, vel quasi de duabus potentiis ita separatis, quod una sine alia habeat operationem suam perficere, et aliquid intelligat intellectus agens sine possibili.*” For the argument that Bonaventure’s distinction between agent and possible intellects is blurred, see Leen Spruit’s *Species Intelligibilis*, 135.

sion of the agent intellect initiate cognition, bringing the *species* into act,³³ and 2) how can the agent intellect bring the possible intellect into act when the agent intellect is not itself completely in act?³⁴ Bonaventure says that some have answered these questions by interpreting the agent and possible intellects within a version of Platonic recollection. For them, agent intellect would differ from possible intellect only by the agent intellect's having an innate possession of all intelligibles, which the possible intellect has yet to acquire through phantasms: "The agent intellect is called a certain habit constituted out of all intelligibles, while the possible intellect is understood to be itself the same [*idem ipse*], except that it is in potency for acquiring cognition through phantasms."³⁵ These unnamed thinkers use Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to support their claim that, without an innate possession of universals, the agent intellect would lack the intrinsic capacity [*non posset per virtutem suam*] to make the possible intellect an understanding in act through abstraction (CS 2.569a): "Everything that educes another from potency to act is [itself] a being in act."³⁶ As these unnamed thinkers see it, this Aristotelian principle requires

33. Herbert Davidson describes the logic of Avicenna's agent intellect as follows: "Inasmuch as the actuality of the human intellect is actual intelligible thought, actual intelligible thoughts must be what the active intellect provides the human intellect. And if the active intellect provides the human intellect with intelligible thoughts, it must consist in them itself. It must 'provide and imprint upon the soul of the forms of intelligible thought from its own substance.'" Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 87.

34. See n. 36 below.

35. CS 2.569a. For the Latin, see n. 38 below.

36. CS 2.569a. "*Omne enim quod educit alterum de potentia in actum, est ens in actu.*" Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1049b 23–8. Bonaventure's unnamed opponent produces the same argument at objection 32, *DSC q4 5.20b* to defend the Augustinian version of the agent intellect as God: "Again, every potential being is reduced to act through some being of the same genus which exists in actuality. But our intellect is in potency, like the intellect of a boy. Therefore, if it is to become intelligent in act, this must be brought about through someone who has an actual knowledge of all things. But this is none other than the eternal wisdom. Therefore, etc. If you say that this is the agent intellect, then I ask: either the agent intellect actually knew that which the soul came to learn, or it did not. If it did not, then the intellect could not be made knowledgeable in act by means of it. But if it did, then either the intellect which learns both knows and is ignorant of the same thing at the same time, or else the agent intellect is not something that belongs to the soul, but is something above the soul. It remains, therefore, that whatever the intelligent soul apprehends through something else, it apprehends through something that is above the soul. But God alone is above the soul. Therefore, etc. If you say that the agent intellect is called 'agent' not because it actually knows but because it causes knowledge, I say to the contrary that every intelligent being is superior to the non-intelligent. Therefore, if the agent intellect is not intelligent, it can never make itself or any other being intelligent in act because it cannot produce something better than or more noble than itself. Therefore, if it becomes intelligent in act, it is necessary that this be done through something that is superior to itself. But this can only mean the eternal reason and truth. Therefore, etc." As I argue below, Bonaventure's deviation from Avicenna and from those who hold this Aristotelian version of recollection parallels a line of interpreting

them to adopt a version of Platonic recollection in which the individual's agent intellect would constantly possess all intelligible *species*. This version of recollection would propose two intellects within each individual, identical except in the degree of their perfection, and would explain learning as the gradual copying of *species* from the perfect one to the imperfect one. The agent intellect could bring the possible intellect to act, in this view, because it would have these *species* to give. However, requiring the agent intellect to possess its objects continuously presents two problems for Bonaventure. On the one hand, he finds it logically absurd to claim that I do not know the *species* present in my own intellect:

We should not think that ... the agent intellect knows something, which that man whose intellect it is nevertheless does not know. For these are empty and frivolous words, that my intellect knows something I do not know.³⁷

As I have illustrated above, for Bonaventure, the agent intellect is 'conformal' with the possible intellect, and therefore has its own qualitatively different role to play within one cognitive operation. The agent intellect cannot, therefore, be related to the possible intellect as an "*idem ipse*,"³⁸ and when the agent gives *species* to the possible intellect, it does not gradually transform the possible intellect into another agent intellect. This error is in fact rooted in the misconception of the agent intellect as a separate substance, the first position Bonaventure felt the need to discard. Against recollection, therefore, Bonaventure brings Aristotle's claims 1) that the soul was created as a *tabula rasa*, and 2) that the soul does not have innate cognition since it acquires the *species* through corporeal sense and temporal experience.³⁹

the way in which agent intellect is in act, extending back to Averroes. For Averroes' deviation from Avicenna in this regard, see Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 316.

37. CS 2.571a–b. "*Non debemus cogitare ... et aliquid cognoscat intellectus agens, quod tamen homo, cuius est ille intellectus, ignoret. Haec enim vana sunt et frivola, ut aliquid sciat intellectus meus, quod ego nesciam.*" At 2 *Sent.* d. 29, art. 1, q. 2 (CS 2.902b), Bonaventure gives the more complete argument: "*Si enim intellectus agens haberet habitus cognoscendorum, quare non posset illos communicare possibili sine adiutorio sensuum inferiorum? Rursus, si intellectus agens haberet habitus cognoscendorum, iam anima a sua conditione non esset ignorans, immo potius esset sciens.*" Notably, this is one of William of Auvergne's repeated critiques of an earlier interpretation of Averroism (see William of Auvergne, *De Anima*, 7.3).

38. CS 2.569a. "*Uno modo, ut intellectus agens dicatur habitus quidam constitutus ex omnibus intelligibilibus; intellectus vero possibilis intelligatur idem ipse, prout est in potentia ad acquirendam cognitionem per phantasmata.*"

39. CS 2.569a. "*Sed iste modus dicendi verbis Philosophi non consonat, qui dicit, 'animam esse creatam sicut tabulam rasam.' nec habere cognitionem habituum sibi innatam, sed acquirere mediante sensu et experientia.*"

To explain how the agent intellect as power is empty of *species*, but is nevertheless capable of initiating cognition, Bonaventure first turns to Dionysius, who provides a philosophical precedent to link the perfection of intellectual substance with spiritual light: "For it is true, according to Dionysius, that intellectual substances, by the very reason that they are intellectual substances, are lights. Therefore spiritual light is the perfection and fulfillment [*complementum*] of intellectual substance."⁴⁰ The Dionysian argument is that if spiritual light, or *lumen*, is an active principle by nature and every spiritual substance is spiritual light, then every spiritual substance is intrinsically the very principle by which it can be made ontologically complete. This supplies the major premise that the ontological completion of an intellectual substance through knowing is made by the action of its own light rather than through some extrinsic light. Furthermore, Psalm 4 verse 7 asserts that the human intellect is itself such a light: "The light of your face has been signed over us, Lord."⁴¹ This text indicates to Bonaventure that the human soul possesses its own intellectual light, since it is made in the image of God, the exemplary spiritual light.⁴² The Psalmist therefore supplies Bonaventure with the minor premise that the human intellect is an intellectual light. It follows in turn, that, like any other intellectual substance, the human intellect can perfect itself through its own activity. Bonaventure finds complementary support in Aristotle's *De Anima* to argue that the human intellectual light has the capacity to make what is potential into what is actual: "This light the Philosopher seems to have understood to be the agent intellect. For he says that 'that intellect, by which there is a making of all things, is just like a certain positive disposition, as in light; for in a certain way also light makes

40. CS 2.569b. "*Verum enim est secundum Dionysium, quod substantiae intellectuales, eo ipso quod intellectuales substantiae, lumina sunt: ergo perfectio et complementum substantiae intellectualis lux est spiritualis.*" According to John Francis Quinn, there is a noticeable difference between Bonaventure and Aquinas in their interpretations of light. For Aquinas, light is strictly corporeal, while for Bonaventure *lumen* "has a properly spiritual nature found principally in the Creator, who is purely light and, as such, the cause of the light in the human soul" (John Francis Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy*, Studies and Texts by the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973], 512).

41. CS 2.569b. Since other scholastics interpreted this verse in different ways, as for instance Aquinas in *Summa Theologica* 1a, 84.5, and Bonaventure's relatively sparse interpretation here needs as much transparency as possible, I quote the Latin text, resuming from the end of the Latin quotation in n. 40 above: "*Ergo illa potentia, quae consequitur animam ex parte intellectus sui, quoddam lumen est in ipsa, de quo lumine potest intelligi illud Psalmi: Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine.*" For a corrective analysis of Aquinas' later understanding of this verse to support his own interpretation of Aristotle's agent intellect as a power of the soul, see Wayne J. Hankey, "Participatio Divini Luminis, Aquinas' Doctrine of the Agent Intellect: Our Capacity for Contemplation," *Dionysius* XXII (2004): 149–78, esp. 156.

42. See n. 40 above.

colors in potency to be colors in act'.⁴³ Furthermore, Bonaventure highlights a precedent for an instrumental power that can initiate an act of knowing through itself in nature, namely in the eye of the cat, which "has not only a power of receiving through the nature of the perspicuous, just as other eyes, but also the power of making in itself the *species* through the nature of light appointed to it."⁴⁴ While the cat's eye does not abstract intellectual *species*, it nevertheless serves as a natural precedent of an abstracting power that spontaneously brings a receptive power to act by activating a *species* it does not intrinsically possess.

So far, Bonaventure has argued, by grounding this argument in Catholic and in philosophical authorities,⁴⁵ that the agent intellect as a light of the human soul can abstract *species* without already possessing them. However, he must still in some way reconcile the intermittency of discursive thought with the Aristotelian claim that the agent intellect is always in act, another important aspect of Bonaventure's explanation of how the agent intellect initiates cognition.⁴⁶ Bonaventure examines this problem through the question of whether the agent and possible intellects can be distinguished as, respectively, a power that is fully developed (*absoluta*), and a power that only exists within a relation to another thing (*comparata*). First he considers, but dismisses, the view that the possible intellect is a relative power (*comparata*) if that means the relativity of its power depends upon the soul's embodiment. The proposal is that the two powers would in fact be one and the same power, labeled "agent intellect" when the soul is separate from the body, and re-labeled "possible intellect" when the soul is attached to the body. This would make the difference between the two depend exclusively upon whether or not the relation

43. CS 2.569b. "*Hoc lumen videtur Philosophus intellexisse esse intellectum agentem. Dicit enim, quod 'ille intellectus, quo est Omnia facere, est sicut habitus quidam, ut in lumine; quodam enim modo et lumen facit colores potentia actu colores.'*"

44. CS 2.569b. Its special capacity for abstracting visual *species* without an exterior light apparently made the cat capable of seeing in the dark.

45. At the beginning of this particular argument, Bonaventure indicates that there is both Catholic and Philosophical support for his claim, writing, "*et iste modus dicendi probabilis est et verus et super verba philosophica et catholica fundatus*" (CS 2.569b).

46. In this, I differ from Marrone, who writes, "[In 2 *Sent.* 24.1.2.4] Bonaventure had ... taken note of this Aristotelian dictum [that agent intellect was always in act], explaining that it did not have to mean that the agent was always in act but merely that it was an active force, ever ready to illuminate" (Marrone, *Light of Thy Countenance*, vol. 1, 175 n. 86). On my reading, Bonaventure maintains that the agent is indeed always in act, even if a minimum level of act, and that this must be so for the soul to think spontaneously (see n. 53 below). My problem with Marrone's characterization of Bonaventure's agent intellect as an "active force" is that I do not see how it permits an understanding, grounded in Bonaventure's metaphysics, of the soul's capacity to think spontaneously. The notion of an active force, when it is explicitly distinguished from Aristotelian activity, seems to me to belong to a Newtonian Physics rather than to an analysis of the powers of soul.

to the body is taken into account.⁴⁷ In this view, the body would have a dual role. On the one hand, it would act as an impediment that causes the intellectual power to halt its activity, thus causing the intermittence of our thought (CS 2.596b). On the other hand, the body would provide the phantasms, from which the intellectual *species* are abstracted. The tendency of the agent intellect would be to think, while the body would intermittently frustrate the agent intellect's otherwise continuous activity, like someone poking a stick in the blades of a rotating fan, causing a periodic interruption. The advantage of this proposal is that it permits the agent intellect to be continuously in act, thus satisfying the Aristotelian condition,⁴⁸ and at the same time it provides an explanation for the intermittence of our thinking. However, if the agent intellect's relation to the corporeal body should be the cause not only of intermittent thinking, but also of the possible intellect's existence, the possible intellect could not exist in the separated soul, a conclusion that Bonaventure finds untenable.⁴⁹ In his view, not only does the separated human soul have both a possible and an agent intellect, but so do even the angels.⁵⁰ On the one hand, Bonaventure does accept that the body is an impediment to intellectual cognition, and as such provides the explanation for the intermittence of our thinking.⁵¹ However, the body does not transform the agent intellect into the possible intellect by impeding the illuminative act of the agent intellect. Instead, since agent and possible intellects are both present at once in the separated soul, they cannot be distinguished simply by taking or failing to take into account the soul's relation to the body. The problem therefore becomes how to distinguish agent and possible intellects as complete and relative powers and also allow for the possible intellect in the separated soul.⁵² First, the agent intellect is taken as a fully developed power in the sense that it is constantly performing its illuminating role within the cognitive act, like a light that is always shining. This is so even when the human body, as impediment, obstructs the object that would otherwise be illuminated, preventing abstraction.⁵³ Furthermore, to be constantly il-

47. CS 2.569b. "*Una omnino et eadem est potentia intellectus agens et possibilis, differens comparatione sola: ut agens sit, prout est in se considerata, possibilis vero, prout unitur corpori et phantasmatis.*"

48. See n. 36 above.

49. CS 2.569b. "*Sed hic modus ponendi deficit a veritate, quoniam anima separata habet intellectum, quo est omnia facere, habet etiam intellectum, quo est omnia fieri: ergo habet agentem et possibilem, etiam cum separata est.*"

50. See 2 *Sent.* d. 3, pt. 2, art. 2, q. 1 (CS 2.119b).

51. CS 2.570a. "*Non est semper in actu suo propter impedimentum a parte corporis.*"

52. For a critique of the following Bonaventuran account as an inadequate theory, see Mary Dady, "Theory of Knowledge," 16.

53. CS 2.570a. "*Et hinc est, quod una dicitur convenire animae secundum se, altera vero in comparatione ad corpus, et una semper esse in actu, altera vero non: quia semper anima actu intel*

luminating, the agent does not require another power beyond itself.⁵⁴ Thus, while the agent's act of abstraction and the intellect's act of intellectual cognition are intermittent, the agent intellect of each individual soul is always in act, running uninterrupted, like the pilot light of intellectual cognition.⁵⁵ This is a prior, self-sufficient moment of illuminating pre-supposed in the act of abstracting intelligible species from phantasms (CS 2.570a). Thus, Bonaventure's position is that the agent intellect is indeed not fully in act, and cannot perfect its act by itself since it does not possess the intellectual *species* in act, nor is it capable of receiving them.⁵⁶ It nevertheless exists as a rudimentary form of continuous actuality, an intellectual light that never goes out. Furthermore, I suggest that the agent intellect's continuousness is critical to allow the spontaneity of the cognitive act that Bonaventure desires to maintain. The possible intellect, on the other hand, is a relative power in the sense that it has no moment of self-sufficiency. That is, without the intelligible phantasms and the agent intellect, the possible intellect can only wait to perform its acts of reception and judgment. To be in act, the possible intellect therefore depends on both the bodily senses and the agent intellect to provide the phantasms.⁵⁷

AVERROES AS A POSSIBLE SOURCE FOR BONAVENTURE'S AGENT INTELLECT

At this point, I would like to explore a parallel between Bonaventure's notion of the agent intellect as a power of soul that is continuously in act, but not continuously in possession of intelligible *species*, and on the other hand, the account of the agent intellect found in Averroes' *Long Commentary on the De Anima* (LCDA). In the introduction to his 2009 translation of Averroes' LCDA, Taylor summarizes the status of current scholarship on the question of Averroes' influence on thirteenth-century Latin philosophy. According to Taylor's summary, René Gauthier expands the thesis, originally proposed by Salman (1937), that the Latin West interpreted Averroes' psychology in two historical stages, the pre-1250 and post-1250 periods. For Gauthier, the earlier period accurately interpreted Averroes as locating the agent and material intellects within the individual soul, and happily welcomed this version of Averroism. This stage constituted "first Averroism." On the other hand, the post-1250 period falsely ascribed monopsychism to Averroes, and

ligat per intellectum agentem, sed quia, sicut lumen corporale semper lucet et de se promptum est ad illuminandum, res autem illuminabilis non semper illuminatur propter aliquod impedimentum."

54. CS 2.570a. "*Et ita una de se quodam modo completa et habitata.*"

55. See n. 53 above.

56. In his replies to objections 5 and 6 (CS 2.570b–2.571a), Bonaventure repeats this claim, which I have reviewed.

57. CS 2.570a. "*Alia [potentia] vero indigens habilitatione et complemento; et [anima] ... sit nata ad illud complementum venire mediante auxilio corporis et corporalium sensuum.*"

then rejected this inauthentic interpretation of Averroes as heretical.⁵⁸ Carlos Bazán initially accepts the Salman-Gauthier two-stage view, but argues persuasively that Gauthier's attributions of authenticity should be inverted. In Bazán's view, the pre-1250 interpretations of Averroes that locate the agent and possible intellects within the soul are inauthentic, while the post-1250 attributions of monopsychism to Averroes are accurate.⁵⁹ In terms of my analysis of Bonaventure, I would like to point out that while the Gauthier and Bazán schemas both characterize their final stages as critical of Averroes, neither prohibits those thinkers like Bonaventure, who opposed Averroes' monopsychism, from having been influenced by Averroes in important but unacknowledged ways. In fact, current scholarship is beginning to explore Averroes' overlooked, silent influence on the later thirteenth-century Latins.⁶⁰ In light of this direction in research, I will now turn to the question of whether Bonaventure's account of the agent intellect's act could have also been influenced by the Commentator.

As I have argued, Bonaventure's account of the agent intellect as a power of the soul is very much dependent on his re-conceiving how the agent intellect is in act. I have emphasized that the Augustinian-Avicennian interpretation of the *donator* agent intellect, in act by constantly possessing all intelligibles, is incompatible with the conception of agent intellect as one of the soul's powers, at least in Bonaventure's view.⁶¹ As I have indicated above, Bonaventure explicitly draws on Dionysius to support the notion that the agent intellect as the soul's created intellectual light can perfect the soul.⁶² However, I do

58. Richard C. Taylor, "Introduction," in *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, trans. R.C. Taylor, ed. Thérèse-Anne Druart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), c–cii.

59. For Bazán, thinkers in the first period of this reception, which Bazán re-labels the "eclectic period" in place of Gauthier's "first Averroism," misrepresent Averroes. The reason for this misrepresentation is that they are less interested in reading the Commentator on his own terms than they are in using whatever they could borrow from Averroes to support their presupposition that the soul was at once an individual substance in itself and also the form of the body (Taylor, "Introduction," cii–civ). For a schema that shows a three-stage reception specifically of Aristotle's *De Anima*, see Bernardo Carlos Bazán, "13th Century Commentaries on De Anima: From Peter of Spain to Thomas Aquinas," in *Il commento filosofico nell'Occidente latino, secoli XIII–XV*, ed. G. Fioravanti, C. Leonardi, and S. Perfetti (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 119–84.

60. See, for instance, Richard Taylor, "Aquinas and the Arabs: Aquinas's First Critical Encounter with the Doctrine of Averroes on the Intellect, In 2 *Sent.* d. 17, q. 2, a. 1," in *Philosophical Psychology in Medieval Aristotelianism* (Paris: Vrin, forthcoming). Taylor analyzes various ways that Aquinas, in 2 *Sent.* d. 17, q. 2, art. 1, both critiques and incorporates the thought of Averroes and Avicenna in his concepts of the agent and material intellects.

61. Also see nn. 33 and 36 above.

62. Although an analysis of Bonaventure's debt to the Greek Neoplatonic tradition is beyond the scope of my present treatment, it is important to note the similarities of Bonaventure to the positions of Proclus (who would have been transmitted to the early Bonaventure through Dionysius) and Pseudo-Simplicius. For Proclus, even when the soul is not actually thinking, it has the capacity to begin thinking because of a constant, latent intellectual activity. Proclus

not take Dionysius to be the principal or the only source for Bonaventure's reinterpretation of agent intellect. In an admittedly cursory fashion, I would like to point to a closer precedent in the Latin translation of Averroes' *Long Commentary* for Bonaventure's conception of the agent intellect as illuminating light, which is in act without possessing the intelligible *species*.⁶³

When examining Averroes' *CMDA*, it should be noted at the outset that the Arabic original takes Aristotle to posit a three-fold, rather than a two-fold, distinction within the intellect.⁶⁴ The Latin translation that would have

likens the continuousness of this intellectual act to the body's ceaseless act of breathing, and also to an internally-shining light (Carlos Steel, "Proclus on the Innate Knowledge of the Soul," in *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism*, ed. John J. Cleary [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997], 298–99). For Pseudo-Simplicius, who is specifically commenting on Aristotle's *De Anima*, "the *agent intellect* corresponds to that reasoning activity which is permanently present in the essence of the soul. This is as it were the 'breathing thought' of the soul, a rational activity in virtue of its being" (ibid. 306). For the history of Proclus' influence on Medieval Latin thought, see Wayne Hankey, "Misrepresenting Neoplatonism in Contemporary Christian Dionysian Polemic: Erigena and Nicholas of Cusa versus Vladimir Lossky and Jean-Luc Marion," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82.4 (2008): 683–703, esp. 683–94.

63. From Bonaventure's multiple references to the Commentator, we know that he had read Averroes' *CMDA* by the time he wrote his *Commentary on the Sentences* (see, for instance 2 *Sent.* dist. 17, art. 2, q. 1 [CS 2.444–2.448]). Marrone finds an Averroistic influence on Bonaventure's theory of the agent intellect, particularly for "the idea that agent intellect generated knowledge of the principles of science," and that "the agent intellect God impressed on mind acted as a light of judgment" (Marrone, *Light of thy Countenance*, vol. 1, 174). For a summary of Averroes' active intellect as a light that leads what is potential into act as distinct from Avicenna's donative active intellect, see Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 315 ff. Also see n. 36 above. Although it is beyond the scope of my present treatment to draw the link between Bonaventure and Albert the Great (who is far more sympathetic to Averroes than is Bonaventure), it is worth noting that Albert the Great explicitly draws on Averroes to interpret the agent intellect as capable of activating the possible intellect without itself being full of forms: "*Similiter dicimus intellectum agentem humanum esse conjunctum animae humanae, et esse simplicem, et non habere intelligibilia, sed agere ipsa in intellectu possibili ex phantasmatibus, sicut expresse dicit Averroes in commento libri de Anima*" (Albertus Magnus, *Secunda pars Summae de Creaturis*, ed. Auguste Borgnet, vol. 35 [Parisiis: apud Ludovicum Vivès, 1896], 466b). For the argument that Albert's project is to perfect, rather than to refute, Averroes' psychology, see Alain de Libera, "Albert the Great," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig, accessed 6 July 2011 at <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/B004SECT3>. For a treatment that illustrates Albert's interpretation of the agent intellect as possibly separable from the human soul, and for the claim that for Albert the agent intellect's light already possesses the *species*, see Leen Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis*, 142–43.

64. The Latin translation follows the Arabic original in positing a third distinction in the intellect, perhaps influenced by Alexander of Aphrodisias. Taylor argues that the source of this third distinction is a corrupt translation of Aristotle's *De Anima*, which is not in Averroes' *Middle Commentary* translation of the *De Anima*, or in Aristotle's Greek text (Averroës, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, in Yale Library of Medieval Philosophy, trans. R.C. Taylor, ed. Therese-Anne Druart [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009], 349 n. 171) (hereafter cited as *LCD*A).

been available to Bonaventure furthermore posits a distinction between the agent intellect (*agens intellectus*) and the agent intelligence (*agens intelligens*), a distinction invented by the Latin translator.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the Latin does not describe either *agens intellectus* or *agens intelligens* in act in the sense of constantly knowing all forms:

It is necessary that there is in [the part of the soul, which is called intellect] ... a second part which is called intellect according as it makes that intellect which is in potency to understand everything in act (for the reason on account of which it makes the intellect in potency to understand all things in act is nothing other than because it is [itself] in act; for this, because [the agent intellect] is in act, is the reason that [the potential intellect] understand all things in act). [It is necessary] that there is also a third part, which is called an intellect because it makes every potentially intelligible to be actually intelligible.⁶⁶

Here, neither agent intellect nor agent intelligence possesses or constantly thinks the forms; both are understood simply as being in act in such a way that allows the one to educe the potential intellect into act and the other to educe the potentially intelligible into the actually intelligible. Additionally, although Aristotle's text offers an analogy between the agent intellect's action on the potential intellect and the artist's action on his medium,⁶⁷ Averroes carefully qualifies the analogy to illustrate the strictly illuminative character of the agent(s). In the case of the artist imposing form on the medium, the whole form originates from the artist, and the agent is therefore a *donator formarum*.⁶⁸ However, Averroes argues, this cannot describe the case of the agent intellect or there would be no need for the senses or imagination; without any need to consult the sensible intentions, the agent would simply give the intelligible forms it possessed to the patient.⁶⁹ At the same time, the

65. For Taylor's account of these two layers of corruption, see Averroes, *CMDA* 349 n. 170. Taylor dates the Latin translation of Averroes' text to approximately 1220 (Taylor, "Introduction," xcix). For the argument that this text is available to the Latins by 1225, although it does not have any notable influence on them until 1240, see Hässe, *Avicenna's De Anima* 35. For a discussion of the standard assumption that Michael Scotus was the Latin translator of the *CMDA*, among other works by Averroes, see Dag Nikolaus Hässe, *Latin Averroes Translations of the First Half of the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Olms, 2010).

66. Averroes, *CMDA* III, comm. 18, 437. "*Necesse est ut in ea [i.e. parte anime que dicitur intellectus] ... secunda pars que dicitur intellectus secundum quod facit istum intellectum qui est in potentia intelligere omne in actu (causa enim propter quam facit intellectum qui est in potentia intelligere omnia in actu nichil aliud est nisi quia sit in actu; hoc enim, quia est in actu, est causa ut intelligat in actu omnia), et quod in ea etiam sit tertia pars que dicitur intellectus secundum quod facit omne intellectum in potentia esse intellectum in actu.*"

67. Averroes, *CMDA* III, comm. 17, 436.

68. Averroes, *CMDA* III, comm. 18, 438. "*Ars enim imponit formam in tota materia absque eo quod in materia sit aliquid existens de intentione forme antequam artificium fecerit eam. Et non est ita in intellectu.*"

69. Averroes, *CMDA* III, comm. 18, 438. "*Quoniam, si ita esset in intellectu, tunc homo non*

imaginative intention alone is only potentially intelligible since it is individual, not universal, and the agent is therefore required to move the imaginative intention into act by abstracting universal from particular.⁷⁰ The action of the agent intellect is not an act of giving intelligible forms, but of making intelligible the content provided by sensation. Averroes emphasizes that for Aristotle, the agent acts in this process like physical light activating colours so that they can be seen:

It is as if [Aristotle] says, “the way which compelled us to establish the agent intellect is the same as that on account of which vision requires light.” For just as vision is not moved by colours, except when they are in act, because it is not activated unless light is present with it, drawing out the colours from potency into act, so also the imaginative intentions do not move the material intellect except when they are intelligibles in act, because [the material intellect] is not completed unless with something else present, that is the intellect in act.⁷¹

Furthermore, in a later passage, Averroes argues that the material intellect rather than the agent intellect contains the forms:

When [Aristotle] had described the ways in which [the agent intellect] imparts to the material intellect, he designated the disposition belonging to the agent intellect. [Aristotle] said, “it is, in its own substance, act,” which means that there is no potential in it for anything, as [there is] a potential in the recipient intellect for receiving forms. The agent intelligence understands nothing of those things which are here.⁷²

The Averroistic agent intellect is in act, then, not in the sense of constantly possessing the objects of thought, but rather by abstracting universals from particulars, and in this actualization, acting like physical light actualizing colours in visible objects.⁷³

indigeret, in comprehendendo intelligibilia, sensu neque ymaginatione; immo intellecta pervenirent in intellectu materialem ab intellectu agenti, absque eo quod intellectus materialis indigeret aspicere formas sensibiles.”

70. Averroes, *CMDA* III, comm. 18, 438–39.

71. Averroes, *CMDA* III, comm. 18, 439. “*Et quasi dicit: et modus qui coegit nos ad impo-
nendum intellectum agentem idem est cum modo propter quem indiget visus luce. Quemadmodum
enim visus non movetur a coloribus nisi quando fuerint in actu, quod non completur nisi luce pre-
sente, cum ipsa sit extrahens eos de potentia in actum, ita etiam intentiones ymagnate non movent
intellectum materialem nisi quando fuerint intellecte in actu, quod non perficitur eis nisi aliquo
presente quod sit intellectus in actu.*”

72. Averroes, *CMDA* III, comm. 19, 441. Averroes characterizes the agent intellect in this way primarily to satisfy Aristotle’s condition that it is unmixed (*non mixta*). For a clear and succinct account of the material intellect in Averroes as container of the forms, see Taylor, “Intelligibles in Act in Averroes,” 129–31.

73. See Taylor, “Introduction,” lxv. For the argument that for Averroes the relation between the active intellect and the material intellect is not like the relation between light and the eye, but like the relation between light and the medium, see Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 318–19.

While Averroes 1) repeatedly emphasizes the control the individual has over the processes of abstraction and reception, and 2) also locates the two intellectual powers of reception and abstraction in us,⁷⁴ he does not have a way to reconcile these points with his claim that both agent and material intellects are substances outside the soul. As Herbert Davidson writes: “the question that cries out for an answer, namely, how a transient human soul can induce the eternal active intellect and eternal material intellect to do its bidding, is never addressed.”⁷⁵ Thus, while there are precedents in Averroes for asserting the human individual's control over the process of thinking, and for the concomitant claim that the agent is somehow present in the soul, both of which are also aspects of Bonaventure's interpretation of the human intellect, I wish to lay stress on the precedent in Averroes for what I take to be the logical foundation of Bonaventure's individual agent intellect. That is, the agent is in act in such a way that gives it the power to educe the potential intellect into act, without itself possessing the intelligibles. I take this to be the more basic and important claim because it is what permits Bonaventure to hold the other two.

In considering the influence of the Peripatetic tradition on Bonaventure, one might reasonably ask whether there was a more likely source than Averroes for Bonaventure's notion of the agent intellect, for instance, in Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De Intellectu* or Alfarabi's *De Intellectu*. Since their epistemologies emphasize Aristotle's image of light, argue that human knowledge is acquired by abstraction from the object of sensation and also, crucially, were available to Bonaventure, might these thinkers not be equally plausible sources for Bonaventure's interpretation of Aristotle's agent intellect? At the beginning of the Latin translation of Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De Intellectu et intellectu*,⁷⁶ available in Paris as early as the end of the twelfth century,⁷⁷ Alexander emphasizes Aristotle's use of the image of light activating colours to explain how the agent intellect activates the potential intellect.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Alexander

74. For both claims, see Averroes, *CMDA* III, comm. 18, 439–40. For a summary of Aquinas' analysis of Averroes that emphasizes these points, see Taylor, “Aquinas's First Critical Encounter.”

75. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 319.

76. For the argument that the twelfth-century Latin translation of Alexander's *Peri Nou* received by the West (i.e., the *De Intellectu*) was an Arabized version of the Greek original, see Étienne Gilson, “Les sources Greco-Arabes de l'Augustinisme Avicennisant,” *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen-âge* 4 (1929): 20–22.

77. Gabriel Théry, *Autour du décret de 1210: II. Alexandre d'Aphrodise: aperçu sur l'influence de sa noétique* (Le Saulchoir, Kain [Belgique]: Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, 1926), 83.

78. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De intellectu et intellectu*, ed. Gabriel Théry, in Théry, *Autour du décret de 1210: II. Alexandre d'Aphrodise* 76. “Sicut dicit Aristoteles, est sicut comparacio luminis; sicut enim lumen, causa est colorum visorum in potencia ut videantur in effectu, sic hec intelligencia facit intellectum materialem, qui est in potencia, esse intellectum in effectu.”

also stipulates that the agent intellect does not of itself donate the forms to the material intellect, but plays a critical role in abstracting them from the objects of sense perception.⁷⁹ However, Alexander identifies the act of intellect with the object of thought so thoroughly that it would be difficult to argue that his version of the agent intellect does not itself constantly possess the objects of thought.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Alexander is far clearer than Averroes in saying that the agent intellect is extrinsic to the soul, which further separates him from Bonaventure's account.⁸¹ Another possible source is Alfarabi's *De Intellectu*, translated from the Arabic in Toledo, and available to the thirteenth-century Parisian medievals.⁸² Like Averroes and Alexander, Alfarabi also stresses Aristotle's analogy of the agent intellect to light.⁸³ On the other hand, while for Alfarabi human knowledge is acquired by abstracting forms from matter, his version of the agent intelligence pre-contains purely immaterial forms that have never been enmattered.⁸⁴ Furthermore, he unequivocally posits that the

79. *Ibid.*, 77. "*Intelligencia enim in effectu, semper est intellecta; hec igitur est intelligibilis de natura sua, que est intelligencia in effectu; que cum sit causa intellectui materiali ad abstrahendum et intelligendum et ymaginandum singulas formas materiales, et fiunt intellectum in effectu secundum illas formas, dicitur de ea quod ipsa est intellectus adeptus agens, qui nec est pars nec virtus anime in nobis; sed fit in nobis ab extrinsecus, scilicet cum nos intelligimus per illam.*" For an explanation of why, for Alexander, the material intellect requires the agent intellect, see Gilson, "Les sources Greco-Arabes," 12–14.

80. For this identification of thinking and what is thought, see for instance Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De intellectu et intellecto* 77–78: "*Quia intellectus qui est in effectu est intellecta in effectu, ideo cum intelligat intellecta, intelligit se ipsum, eo quod cum intelligit intellecta fit intellectus; nam quia ipse est intellectus qui est in effectu et ipse intelligit ea, tunc cum ipse intelligit se est ipse intellectus, cum enim intelligit ea ipse et intellecta fiunt unum quiddam; sed cum non intelligat ea est aliud ab eis.*"

81. For Alexander's characterization of the agent intellect as the agent "from without," see n. 79 above.

82. Alfarabi and L. Massignon, *Appendice I: le texte Latin médiéval du De intellectu d'Alfarabi*, in Gilson, "Les sources Greco-Arabes," 110.

83. *Ibid.*, 122, ll. 261–66. "*Et sicut sol est qui facit oculum visum in effectu et visa in potencia facit visa in effectu cum lumine quod confert ei, sic et intelligencia agens est que trahit ad effectum intellectum qui est in potencia et facit esse intellectum in effectu cum eo quod tribuit illi ab illo principio et per illam intellecta in potencia fiunt intellecta in effectu.*" Massignon provides the following French translation: "Et de même que c'est le soleil qui fait que l'oeil soit vision en acte et que les visibles en puissance soient visibles en acte, au moyen de la lumière qu'il leur confère, de même c'est l'intelligence agente qui fait passer à l'acte l'intellect qui est en puissance et le fait être intellect en acte au moyen de ce qu'elle lui transmet comme venant de ce principe et c'est par là que les intelligibles en puissance deviennent intelligibles en acte" (*ibid.*, 138). For a summary of Alfarabi's agent intellect as illuminating light, see Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 50 ff. and 69.

84. Alfarabi and L. Massignon, *Appendice I: le texte Latin médiéval du De intellectu d'Alfarabi* 122–23, ll. 277–83. "*Necessarium est ut ordinatio eorum que sunt sit in intellectu qui est in effectu e converso quam est in intelligencia agente. Intelligencia enim agens primum intelligit de his que sunt id quod perfectius est post perfectius et forme que sunt hodie in materiis sunt in intelligencia*

agent intellect is a separate substance.⁸⁵ Like Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De Intellectu*, then, Alfarabi's *De Intellectu* also proposes an agent intellect that is in act in the sense of being full of forms and is more clearly extrinsic to the soul than Averroes' agent intellect. It is therefore also not as likely a source for Bonaventure's agent intellect as Averroes' *CMDA*.

CONCLUSION

Bonaventure's account of natural knowledge in the *De Scientia Christi* presents an illuminationism designed to permit certainty through the stability of the divine *ratio*, but in such a way that allows the act of cognition to arise spontaneously from within the individual. In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bonaventure's complementary interpretation of Aristotle's agent intellect as the created intellectual light of the individual soul, a power distinct from the possible intellect, also aims to preserve the agency of the individual. In this case, Aristotelian abstraction is interpreted as a lower illumination that participates God's *ratio* through the soul's higher aspect. While not possessing the *species* in act, the agent intellect's ceaseless activity as an intellectual light that always shines gives the soul the power to initiate and to govern the intermittent act of cognition. For Bonaventure, neither is natural cognition fundamentally ungrounded or uncertain, nor is the soul merely the passive recipient of an intellectual act that occurs beyond itself. Rather, the individual is capable of cognitive certainty through a mental act initiated and belonging to himself, a conclusion that complements de Libera's thesis. The way in which Bonaventure accounts for the freedom of natural cognition illustrates, from another point of view, that the "modern" self is not, by any means, an invention of modernity.

agente forma abstracta, non quod prius fuerint in materiis et deinde sint abstracte, sed quia nunquam cessauerunt ipse forme esse in ea in effectu."

85. See, for instance, *ibid.*, 121, ll. 230–5. "*Pervenies ad primum ordinem eorum que sunt separata. Ex quorum ordinibus primus est ordo intelligencie agentis. Unde intelligencia agens, quam nominavit Aristoteles in tercio tractatu libri de anima, est forma separata, que nec fuit in materia, nec erit unquam.*" Cf. n. 74 above.

