

# The Metaphysics of Personal Identity

The Immateriality of the Human Mind, the Semantics of Analogy,  
and the Conceivability of God  
Volume 1: Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics

Categories, and What Is Beyond  
Volume 2: Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics

Knowledge, Mental Language, and Free Will  
Volume 3: Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics

Mental Representation  
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Universal Representation, and the Ontology of Individuation  
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12: Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics

# The Metaphysics of Personal Identity:

*Proceedings of the Society for  
Medieval Logic and Metaphysics  
Volume 13*

Edited by

Gyula Klima and Alexander W. Hall

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Stephen Ogden

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



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Series: Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics

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This book first published 2016

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-9054-5  
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9054-0

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# INTRODUCTION

STEPHEN R. OGDEN

The *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* (PSMLM) collects original materials presented at sessions sponsored by the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics (SMLM). SMLM was founded in 2000 by Gyula Klima (Director), Joshua Hochschild, Jack Zupko and Jeffrey Brower, in order to recover the profound metaphysical insights of medieval thinkers for our own philosophical thought. The Society currently has over a hundred members on five continents. Alex Hall took up the position of Assistant Director and Secretary in 2011, with secretarial duties passing to Timothy Kearns in 2014. The Society's maiden publication appeared online in 2001 and the decade that followed saw the release of eight more online volumes. In 2011, PSMLM transitioned to print and republished volumes 1-8 as separately titled editions. Sharp-eyed readers of these volumes will note the replacement of our (lamentably copyrighted for commercial use) lions, who guarded the integrity of the body of an intellectual tradition thought to be dead, with the phoenixes that mark this print rebirth. Volumes 9 and 10 appeared in a dual print/online format. With Volume 11 PSMLM switched to print only. Friends of the lions will be happy to note that they remain at their post, protecting the first ten volumes of the PSMLM at <http://faculty.fordham.edu/klima/SMLM/>, where interested readers can also keep up with SMLM activities and projects.

In 2014 SMLM sponsored sessions at the annual meetings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association (hosted by The Catholic University of America) and the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, annual SMLM venues since 2001 and 2011, respectively. This volume, on the theme of philosophical accounts of personal identity (number 13 in the PSMLM), collects the year's revised proceedings along with work drawn from our 2013 call for papers on the same topic. Forthcoming volumes take up Aquinas on self-knowledge (Volume 14) and mereology and hylomorphism (Volume 15).

Many philosophers think that everything has the property of being self-identical. That is, for all  $x$ ,  $x = x$ . This entails that I (along with all other human beings) have the property of being self-identical. But *why* is that so? And *for how long*?

For medieval philosophers, the first of these questions was related to the principle of individuation. After all, in a way I am also identical with anything that shares my essence, humanity. Socrates, Hannah Arendt, and I are identical with respect to our shared humanity and species. Of course, one might suppose it is simple enough to distinguish the three of us in all kinds of ways. True, but what might distinguish me from other *living* human beings who exhibit many identical properties – living philosophers with brown hair, of the same age, etc., etc.? This question about what distinguishes two present members of the same species or essence (or, as Aristotle sometimes puts it, the same form) is the question of the principle of individuation. Some medieval philosophers, such as Thomas Aquinas, held that matter is the principle of individuation – ultimately you can only distinguish two different human beings (both with the form of humanity) on account of the particular space-time coordinates of their individuating matter, also known as their bodies. Other medieval philosophers found this solution wanting. Scotus argued that none of the normal Aristotelian metaphysical “hardware” (matter, form, accidents, etc.) could actually account for individuation, so he proposed a new entity, the individual *haecceitas*, which could do the job. Others ultimately questioned this entire, roughly “realist” understanding of shared form or essence, and proposed the “nominalist” alternative on which things simply come individuated – there is no universal shared form, the numerical individuation of which only the realist thinks needs explaining.

The second question is even trickier – for how long do I get to be self-identical and what shall determine *that*? This is a question about the *persistence* of my identity and the principle that accounts for that persistence. Some philosophers will say that whoever/whatever is going to be identical with me over time must have my memories, my mind, or my soul. Others will point instead (or in addition) to certain *continuity* requirements, whether mental or physical. Could I be identical with anyone over some metaphysical “gap” in continual existence? If so, are such gaps bridged naturally or are they only possible given some act of God’s divine omnipotence?



This volume presents several papers concerned with such questions, especially as seen by certain medieval philosophers. The first three pieces are comparative papers examining the thought of two or more thinkers, while the final two form a debate about interpreting the single figure of Thomas Aquinas.

Matthew Robinson's *William of Auvergne, Albertus Magnus and the Early Thirteenth-Century Metaphysics of the Personal, Individual Agent of Thought* primarily concerns two different philosophers on the importance of meshing conceptions of the faculty of the intellect with our personal experience of our *selves* as thinking agents. In rudimentary terms, Aristotle held that the soul is the form of living, organic bodies. It accounts for what the living substance is (the kind of substance it is) and for its existence. For a living thing to exist is for it to be matter ensouled. Naturally, living things have different capacities which Aristotle roughly analyzed according to three different, potentially nested, types of soul – the vegetative, sensitive, and rational souls. William of Auvergne and Albert the Great are concerned with an aspect of the rational soul, specifically the interpretation of Aristotle's agent or active intellect, found in *De Anima*, book III, chapter 5, which is somehow responsible for producing all intelligible forms, i.e., concepts inhering in the intellect. This (kind of) intellect was distinguished by Aristotle and most medieval philosophers from a different (kind of) intellect known as the possible or material intellect (featured in *De Anima* III.4, as well as III.5), which is described as receiving the intelligible forms. William considers several interpretations of this agent intellect, but determines that they all render this agent intellect foreign or inimical to the idea of the individual human being as an active agent who pursues understanding over time and discursively. Avicennian and Augustinian versions falsely attribute the agent intellect to an extrinsic source – which could not possibly be compatible with the notion of myself as a personally active thinker. On the other hand, if the agent intellect is intrinsic to the human being, it is either “full” of the intelligible forms and already completely in second actuality (i.e., not merely having a developed capacity for a certain kind of intellectual activity – which would be first actuality – but rather the occurrent exercise of such capacity), or it is “empty.” The former option contradicts every person's own experience of her partial, piecemeal knowledge, while the latter, empty and dormant intellect would be unable, by Aristotelian standards, to act as an agent of understanding at all. Robinson develops the case that Albert argues pointedly against William's interpretations and objections. In doing so, Albert develops the further influential idea that

Aristotle's agent intellect can be made compatible with the notion of the individual and active human thinker by proposing a version of the agent intellect as "empty" of forms, but instrumentally active in a way that allows it to serve as an efficient cause.

My own paper, *Individuation and the Afterlife According to Some Muslim Philosophers and Aquinas*, offers a basic comparison between Aquinas and three Muslim philosophers (Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, and Averroes) on the main themes of this volume. I first look at the more familiar view of Aquinas on the principle of individuation (namely, designated matter), the principle of persistence (namely, the substantial form or soul), and then how Aquinas can make sense of these doctrines with his further claims that the human soul survives the death of the human being in an individuated way and then receives "the same" body again in the resurrection. On my view, this means there is a gap in the existence of the human person, but the gap is bridged by the natural survival of the human soul and the supernatural act of restoring (at least some modicum of) the previous body. I show that he shares some of these doctrines with the three philosophers of the Islamic tradition – especially matter as the principle of individuation (with Averroes), the survival of the individuated soul (with Avicenna), and the possibility of resurrection (with al-Ghazali); however, he alone tries to hold all three views consistently.

Peter Weigel, in turn, compares ideas of identity and persistence in Aquinas and a more modern figure who has had a major impact on contemporary discussions of identity, i.e., John Locke. In his *Aquinas and Locke on Person and Resurrection*, Weigel first shows that Locke's idea of a forensic notion of personal identity tied to memory opens the door to the possibility of gaps in existence as well as a notion of Christian resurrection which de-emphasizes the requirement of having the same body. He then gives his own detailed account of Aquinas's contrasting views on these matters, where persistence is grounded in a more robust metaphysical account of the substantial form and resurrection requires careful analysis of how the numerically same body can be restored to the separated soul.

Turner Nevitt and Gyula Klima offer us a penetrating debate on whether Thomas Aquinas allows for the metaphysical possibility of God annihilating and recreating certain substances. At issue between them is a text from Aquinas's *Quodlibet* IV which seems to state that God certainly *can* annihilate and recreate some substances as numerically identical, thus

allowing for at least supernaturally caused gaps in the existence and identity of certain things.

While both agree that Aquinas says essentially continuous things (like motions) cannot remain identical over gaps, even supernaturally, Nevitt, in his *Annihilation, Re-creation, and Intermittent Existence in Aquinas*, argues that Aquinas does believe material creatures like human beings can be annihilated and recreated numerically identical by God because their existence is only tied to motion and time *per accidens*. Nevitt takes Aquinas to name sublunary material substances specifically in the *Quodlibet* IV passage as among “permanent things,” just like the heavenly bodies, which possess their existence and essence completely at once, and he works to demonstrate how this text should be understood in relation with the rest of Aquinas’s corpus.

On the other hand, in *The Problem of “Gappy Existence” in Aquinas’ Metaphysics and Theology*, Klima argues on the basis of other texts in Aquinas that the existence of material substances, like human beings, even though subject to motion and time only *per accidens*, is still *necessarily* subject to time; thus, its unity demands its continuity. On Klima’s view, it is only because of the continuing existence of the human soul that the human being can be resurrected numerically the same (despite a real gap in the human *being’s* having that existence of the soul between death and resurrection).



# WILLIAM OF AUVERGNE, ALBERTUS MAGNUS AND THE METAPHYSICS OF THE INDIVIDUAL AGENT OF THOUGHT

MATTHEW ROBINSON

In his *De anima*, published in Paris in 1240, William of Auvergne, the philosophically-attentive bishop of Paris, rejects every interpretation he encounters of the Aristotelian agent intellect because he does not see the possibility of coherently reconciling it with an account of the individual intellect, even despite Peripatetic claims to the contrary.<sup>1</sup> William analyzes three competing interpretations of Aristotle's noetic on their own terms,<sup>2</sup> concluding that Aristotle's account of causation cannot explain how the individual human intellect 1) acts spontaneously from within itself and

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<sup>1</sup> The question as to whether William equates the agent intelligence with God has sparked a scholarly debate worth noting. In his "Pourquoi St Thomas a Critiqué St Augustin," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 1 (1926-7): 5-127, esp. p. 49 n. 3, Gilson maintains that William of Auvergne probably accepted the Avicennian-Augustinian version of Aristotle's noetic that takes God as the direct illuminator of the soul, as accurately highlighted by Roland Teske, "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, esp. pp. 228-35. Teske, with whom I am sympathetic, argues that Gilson's is an unlikely reading and that William aimed to reject the Aristotelian noetic entirely. Stephen Marrone, *William of Auvergne and Robert Grosseteste: New Ideas of Truth in the Early Thirteenth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 58, also takes William as rejecting all forms of the Aristotelian noetic. On the other hand, Richard Dales, *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), esp. pp 34-5, holds that William's work is so ambiguous that there is a reasonable case to be made for both sides.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, he analyzes and rejects four interpretations, but since the difference of the fourth does not significantly contribute to my analysis, I omit it here for the sake of my paper's clarity.

also 2) comes to understand the forms gradually and discursively.<sup>3</sup> In *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century*, Richard Dales notes that William of Auvergne's writings "have great value in reflecting [the major intellectual currents of his day], although their influence on subsequent authors is not yet clear."<sup>4</sup> Partly in an effort to respond to Dales' call for better clarity regarding William's influence, this paper attempts to demonstrate that Albert the Great's interpretation of the agent intellect in his early Parisian work, *De homine*, is a carefully-conceived and thorough refutation of William's distinctive argumentation. In his response, the relatively young Albert outlines a coherent reconciliation of the Aristotelian noetic with the claim that the act of intellection properly belongs to the individual, thus demonstrating that psychological individuality is metaphysically tenable by at least one version of the Aristotelian noetic.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> At the outset of his *De anima*, William explains that he will proceed to analyze the Aristotelian claims about the soul, not dogmatically, but philosophically, i.e. in terms of arguments: "[L]et it not enter your mind that I want to use the words of Aristotle as authoritative for proving what I am going to say. I know that authority can only amount to a dialectical argument and can only produce belief, while my aim both in this treatise and everywhere I can is to provide demonstrative certitude, after which you are left with no trace of doubt" (William of Auvergne, *The Soul*, trans. Roland J. Teske, *Mediaeval Philosophical Texts in Translation*; No. 37 [Milwaukee (Wis.): Marquette University Press, 2000], chapter 7, part 3, manuscript p. 205a, translation p. 428). When citing Teske's translation of William's *De anima*, I will indicate Chapter and Part followed by the pagination from William of Auvergne, "Opera Omnia," ed. F. Hotot with Supplementum edited by Blaise Le Feron (Orléans-Paris: 1674; reprint, Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1963), followed by Teske's translated page number. The above citation, for instance, would read as follows: William, *DA* 7.3, 205a, Teske 428. ). Any quotations of the Latin will also be taken from the Orleans-Paris/Frankfurt manuscript since, as far as I am aware, the critical edition of William's *De anima* has not yet been completed.

<sup>4</sup> Dales, *The Problem of the Rational Soul*, 36.

<sup>5</sup> My focus on the metaphysical underpinnings of the self's individuality in the first half of the thirteenth century is influenced by Alain de Libera, who traces the origins of Heidegger's "modern self" to the high Middle ages. In investigating the origins of the subject, or self, Alain de Libera has demonstrated in his ongoing *Archaeologie du Sujet* series that what has been erroneously labelled the "modern subject," or the "modern self" by contemporaries like Heidegger was in fact a conceptual innovation of medieval philosophy. De Libera maintains that the "self" was not an invention of Descartes or of any modern, and sets out to correct a widespread under-appreciation of the contributions of the High Middle Ages to the concept of selfhood.

## William's Critical Survey

In the *De anima*, one of his later works, William of Auvergne, who was the bishop of Paris from 1228 until his death in 1249, examines extensively the question of how the intellect is structured. For the sake of brevity, I highlight his analysis and rejection of three alternative interpretations of the Aristotelian noetic. First, there is the Avicennian-Augustinian illuminationism that proposes to explain human intellection by positing an agent intelligence outside the individual. According to this position, which William mistakes for Aristotle's own position, thinking is explained by the agent intelligence's directly donating actually intelligible forms to the human thinker.<sup>6</sup> However, in William's reading, this Peripatetic stance posits the agent intelligence's illuminating as the only active cause of human knowing. If intellectual discovery were thereby reduced to the soul's passively receiving forms from a super-psychological agent, William objects that we would be unable to account for the phenomenon of intellectual work.<sup>7</sup> In this scenario, studying, reading, attending lectures, philosophizing, or conducting research would become irrelevant to acquiring knowledge.<sup>8</sup> In William's estimation, however, the

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<sup>6</sup> Gilson, "Pourquoi St Thomas," 46 identifies the translator Dominic Gundissalinus, as the author of a text entitled, "*De anima*," which adapts Avicennian illuminationism to the requirements of Christian theology. For a recent endorsement of Gilson's reading of Gundissalinus' illuminationism, see Leen Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis: From Perception to Knowledge*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 116. Although Gundissalinus' name does appear on one of three manuscripts of this text, his authorship of the *De anima* text is still in question (Herbert A. 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), 211.

<sup>7</sup> See William of Auvergne, *DA* 5.7, 122a, Teske 201: "For if the agent intelligence pours knowledge into our souls, as sensible things imprint on the organs of our senses the modifications through which sensible apprehensions are produced, no study, no discovery, and no art of invention is needed by us for the sake of intelligible apprehensions or cognition. Rather . . . the application [*applicatio*, or joining] of our material intellect to the agent intelligence will be sufficient for us—or just the opposite: its application [i.e. its joining to our material intellect will be sufficient] for them—that is, for intelligible apprehensions and acts of cognition."

<sup>8</sup> William, *DA* 7.4, 207a, Teske 436-7: "For what purpose, then, are books of the sciences written and printed with such great effort? To what purpose do people listen to the lectures of masters or doctors? To what purpose do they attend their classes, when in each soul the intellect is so handy and so ready to pour out acts of understanding and the sciences into the material intellect, in accord with which alone or by which alone the human soul understands and knows intellectually?"

energies expended by the thinker in researching and analyzing, or the thinker's experience of thinking as labour, provides evidence persuasive enough to reject the tenet that the agent of our intellection is outside us.<sup>9</sup> The individual's thinking must be through her own agency, as evinced by these phenomena, and therefore, William concludes, her thinking cannot be through a super-psychological agent intelligence. The individual's act of thinking must belong to the individual, but in a way that is metaphysically tenable:

Moreover, how do they understand that the intellect is in us the principle of scientific knowledge [i.e. which they do claim it is]? For, if it is merely an instrument for receiving these sciences, it is not correctly said to be their principle, since reception or receptivity does not make it necessary to call a vessel or some other receptacle the principle of liquids or of anything else it receives. Those, then, who claim that the intellect in us is the principle of sciences, undoubtedly claim that it is an active principle or one productive of the sciences (William, *DA* 5.7, 122b, Teske 202).<sup>10</sup>

If the agent of human understanding cannot be understood as extrinsic to the soul it might, alternatively, be understood as within the soul. The great advantage of an intrinsic agent of understanding would seem to be its resolution of the problem above; an intrinsic agent should explain that rational thinking arises spontaneously from within the soul, in which case the individual would then be the agent of her own intellectual work. To determine whether interpreting the agent intellect as within the soul remedies the problems that stem from the Avicennian extrinsic agent intelligence outlined above, it is important to see how William interprets what is perhaps the single most important Aristotelian metaphysical

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<sup>9</sup> See William, *DA* 5.8, 123a, Teske 203-4: "Moreover, why do we toil [*sudamus*]? Why do we philosophize? Why do we investigate, since, just as sensible things present themselves to us without any investigation and even thrust themselves upon our senses, so the agent intelligence offers [intelligible things] or even thrusts them upon our intellect by itself? . . . Hence, just as this visible sun frees all who see from the labor [*labore*] of the investigation of visible things, so the intelligible sun frees us from the labor [*labore*] of [the investigation of] intelligible things, since it reveals them to us by its rays."

<sup>10</sup> William, *DA* 5.7, 122b, Teske 202: "*Amplius qualiter intelligunt quia intellectus est in nobis principium scientiae; si enim non est nisi instrumentum recipiendi scientias ipsas, non recte dicitur principium earum, cui receptio, neque receptibilitas facit debere, ut vas sive aliquid receptibile dicatur principium liquorum, vel cuiuscumque alterius recepti. Qui igitur ponunt intellectum in nobis esse principium scientiarum, proculdubio ponunt ipsum esse principium agens, sive effectivum scientiarum.*"



principle guiding his reading of the Aristotelian noetic. Generally speaking, an agent must itself already be in act to move what is potential into act.<sup>11</sup> For Aristotle, actuality is prior to potentiality in the order of generation and time because for the agent to be the originative cause that moves what is potential into act, it must give something to what is potential in order to activate it.<sup>12</sup> So as to avoid implying that something comes from nothing, absolutely speaking,<sup>13</sup> the activating agent must itself exist in second actuality, possessing completely whatever it donates. William articulates this conclusion in terms of the intellect, writing that the agent must exist as “knowledge in act [*scientiae in effectu*].”<sup>14</sup> In other words, the agent of the act of understanding must continuously possess all the objects of knowledge in second actuality. In William’s view, this is possible only if the agent is a thinker constantly and always thinking them:

Since everything that acts or impresses something naturally and through itself impresses either [i.] a likeness of itself or [ii.] a likeness which is in it or present to it, it is necessary that all modifications or any dispositions whatever that flow into the material intellect from the agent intellect are likenesses of the agent intellect or of one or many dispositions that are in it

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<sup>11</sup> See n. 16 below.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle articulates this principle of causation in Book 9, Chapter 8 of his *Metaphysics*, a text that would have been available to Latin thinkers by at least the end of the twelfth century, although the translations were updated several times until William of Moerbeke’s translation in the mid-13th century. Aristoteles, *Metaphysics*, ed. Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem, trans. Anonyma sive ‘Media,’ (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 1049b 19-26, Emphasis added: “*Dico . . . hoc quidem homine iam ente secundum actum, et frumento et vidente prius est tempore materia et sperma et visibile, que potentia sunt homo et frumentum et videns, et nondum actu; sed horum tempore priora diversa sunt entia actu ex quibus ea facta sunt; semper enim ex potestate ente fit quod est actu ens ab in actu ente, ut homo ex homine, et musicus ex musico, semper movente aliquo prius, sed movens actu iam est.*” My translation is: “I say indeed that this man now existing in act, and [this] wheat and [this] seer seeing are in time prior to the matter, sperm and the visible, which are man, wheat, and seeing in potentiality and not yet in act; but prior to these in time are different beings in act from which these are made; **for always being in act comes from being in potentiality by being [already] in act**, as man from man, and musical from musical, always something moving first, but a moving that is already in act.”

<sup>13</sup> As Aristotle cautions against in Aristotelis, *Physica (translatio uetus)*, trans. Iacobus Veneticus, A.L. VII.1, fasc. secundus, edd. F. Bossier et J. Brams, 1990, Aristoteles Latinus Database (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), Clavis : 07.1, liber 1, cap. : 8, p. 36, l. 7 (Bekker : 191a) - p. 37, l. 5 (Bekker : 191b).

<sup>14</sup> See n. 15 below.

or present to it. And so, such dispositions are either intellective operations in act or acts of understanding or of knowledge in act, since it is not possible to imagine that they would otherwise be likenesses of the agent intellect. Hence, the agent intellect will be understanding or knowledge in act. . . . (William, *DA* 7.3, Teske 432).<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, William's interpretation forbids the agent from being receptive as it would be if, for instance, it should receive the intelligible form. Such receptivity, William argues, would disqualify the agent intellect from being an agent, properly speaking. In fact, if the "agent" should be receptive, it would be no different from the material or possible intellect:

[The agent] must also understand through itself by a continuous act of understanding. For if it were understanding only in potency, this name by which it is called the agent intellect would in no sense be appropriate for it. Moreover, it would need another agent intellect by which it might be brought from potency to the act of understanding, and in this way the regress would be infinite. . . . Moreover, since it is truly an agent intellect in definition and in name, it will not receive from elsewhere or from outside any disposition by which it is helped so that it comes to understand something in act; otherwise, it would not be an agent, but a potential, possible or material intellect. (William, *DA* 7.3, Teske 430-1).<sup>16</sup>

William sees his conclusion that Aristotelian activity requires an agent that pre-posses the forms and whose act is thus complete, also at work in a version of Platonic recollection that I take to be Roger Bacon's. For

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<sup>15</sup> William, *DA* 7.3, 206b: "*Quoniam omne quod naturaliter, ac per se ipsum agit vel aliquid imprimit, imprimit vel [i.] similitudinem suam, vel [ii.] similitudinem quae in ipso, et apud ipsum est, necesse est passionis omnes seu quascumque dispositiones qua influentur intellectui materiali ab intellectu agente similitudines esse ipsius intellectus agentis, vel dispositionis unius aut plurium quae in ipso vel apud ipsum sunt. Quapropter unaquaeque earum est agens, vel similitudo intellectus agentis secundum aliquam dispositionem quae in ipse vel apud ipsum est. Quare huiusmodi dispositiones vel intellectus sunt in effectu, sive intellectiones sive scientiae in effectu; Quare intellectus agens erit intellectus, sive scientia in effectu.*"

<sup>16</sup> William, *DA* 7.3, 206a: ". . . et propter hoc intelligens etiam per semetipsam actu continuo intelligendi: si enim potentia tantum intelligens esset, nullo modo congrueret ei nominatio haec qua nominatur intellectus agens. Amplius necessarius ei esset alius intellectus agens per quem educeretur de potentia in effectum intelligendi, et hoc modo iret res in infinitum. . . . Amplius cum sit verae rationis, et veri nominis intellectus agens, non erit recipiens aliunde vel a foris dispositionem aliquam, qua adjuvetur ut fiat intelligens aliquid in effectu; alioquin non esset intellectus agens, set potens, possibilis, et materialis."

Bacon, the finitude of human knowing is then accounted for by maintaining that the agent intellect within my soul contains all the forms in act, but is known only partially.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, it is significant that Bacon's noetic adheres to the conclusion William also reaches, that the agent intellect's act is constantly complete and therefore not receptive. However, in William's eyes, there is a different flaw in Bacon's noetic; it pre-supposes a divisible soul. William writes,

It is obvious to every [soul] that understands through itself that it is understanding, and it understands that it understands. And it does not understand that it understands in part or in a part of itself and that something of it or about it, if one may speak this way, does not understand. And as you have often heard in the preceding parts, it understands that its own act of understanding and its being are indivisible. It is, therefore, obvious to it that its essence is nothing but the material intellect, and on this account the agent intellect is itself neither its essence nor part of it (William, *DA* 7.3, Teske 431-2).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Quaestiones supra Undecimum Primae Philosophiae Aristotelis in Opera Hactenus Inedita Rogeri Baconis* (Oxford, 1909-40) 7.110.1-17: "*Alius est intellectus creatus materie transmutabili conjunctus, scilicet corpori, et hic est duplex; quidam est agens, scilicet una pars intellectus elevata ad superiora contemplandum, et hec vocatur intellectus agens, et hec non intelligit per administrationem sensuum, set per exempla sibi innata, confusa tamen; et quantum ad hanc partem non suscipit intellectus lassitudinem, langorem in intelligendo, et hic est intellectus agens (qui) remanet in anima quando a corpore separata est. Alter est intellectus possibilis, scilicet altera pars intellectus vel rationis quando ratio se inclinatur ad inferiora, et hic intelligit per administrationem sensuum, de quo dicitur 'nichil est in intellectu quin prius fuerit in sensu'; de quo dicitur, 'omne nostrum intelligere est cum continuo et tempore'. Et hic lassitudinem, et fatigationem, langorem suscipit in consecutione intelligendi; set non agens quamvis idem sint in substantia quia intelligere agentis non est mensuratum a tempore.*" Timothy Noone, "The Franciscans and Epistemology: Reflections on the Roles of Bonaventure and Scotus," *Medieval Masters: Essays in Honor of Msgr. E.A. Synan* (Houston, Texas: Ctr. for Thomistic Studies, 1999), 73 drew my attention to Bacon's authorship of this noetic in relation to Bonaventure's text. See n. 18 below for Bonaventure's reiteration of this argument.

<sup>18</sup> William, *DA* 7.3, 206b: "*Amplius manifestum est unicuique intelligenti per semetipsam quod ipsa intelligens est, ipsaque intelligit se intelligere, et non intelligit se intelligere in parte, sive in partem sui, sed ut ita dicatur intelligit aliquid sui, sive de se non intelligere in parte, sive in partem sui, sed ut dicatur intelligit aliquid sui, sive de se non intelligere, et sicut saepe audivisti in praecedentibus ipsa intelligit, et suum intelligere, et suum esse impartibile esse, quapropter manifestum est ei quod suum intelligere in sua essentia est, non autem est nec esse potest, nisi in ipso intellectu materiali. Manifestum igitur est ipsi quod*

Here, William follows Augustine in maintaining that the soul is a strong unity, which means that while it has different powers like the intellect and the will, the soul is ontologically simple and cannot be divided into parts.<sup>19</sup> For William, it would therefore make no sense to say that the agent intellect is a subconscious intellectual “part” that gradually transfers forms into the soul’s consciously aware intellect (i.e. the material intellect) since by virtue of its real, strong unity, the human intellect is fully transparent to itself. It follows, contrary to Bacon’s proposal, that none of the intelligible forms in the soul’s agent intellect could ever be hidden from consciousness. Thus, such an intrinsic agent intellect would imply that the soul knows all things always. This is effectively, for William, a *reductio* of Bacon’s position that there is a “full,” i.e. one that continuously possesses the intelligibles, agent intellect within the soul:

Hence, the agent intellect will be understanding or knowledge in act, and in this way the reasoning will return to the point that they who make this assertion find it necessary to admit that the human soul understands or knows in act all the intelligibles that are naturally knowable by it, and this is so whether the agent intellect is a part of the human soul or the human soul itself or whether it is some habit (William, *DA* 7.3, Teske 432).<sup>20</sup>

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*essentia sua non est nisi intellectus materialis: et propter hoc intellectus agens sive formalis, nec ipsa essentia ejus est, nec de ipsa.*” The very same argument against this Baconian position appears in Bonaventure’s *Sentence Commentary*. See Bonaventure, 2 *Sent.* distinction 24, part 1, article 2, question 4, *Respondeo* (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.*”

<sup>19</sup> See William’s rejection of the notion that the soul is composed of faculties, or powers at *DA* 3.1-3.6. Following William’s conclusion, I am connecting “full” with “act” and “part” with “receptive/potential,” in the sense that only an intelligence constantly thinking all the intelligibles, and therefore “full” of forms, is active enough to cause intellection. Later in his *De anima* 7.6, 211b, Teske 445, William explicitly uses the language of fullness [*plena formis*] in describing what he takes to be Aristotle’s own understanding of the agent intellect. Teske correctly points to the *Liber de causis*, para. 92 as William’s actual source for this claim.

<sup>20</sup> William, *DA* 7.3, 206b: “*Quare intellectus agens erit intellectus, sive scientia in effectu, et per hoc redibit ratiocination ad id ut necesse habeant confiteri qui ita ponunt animam humanam esse intelligentem vel scientem omnia intelligibilia sibi naturaliter scibilia in effectu; et hoc sive intellectus agens sit pars animae humanae sive ipsa anima humana, sive habitus aliquis ut praeaudivisti.*”

Having dismissed any version of Platonic recollection, and so leaving Bacon behind, William acknowledges there is yet another way the agent intellect could be conceived as existing within the soul.

In this view, which I suggest is held by two of William's contemporaries, the Franciscan John of La Rochelle and the still-unidentified author of *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, book 2, the agent intellect is within the soul, but is not full of forms. Significantly, this is also the position that Albert will defend. First, William describes this stance writing,

If anyone [holds that] the agent intellect is created only for illuminating the material intellect, since it does not shine upon itself for the purpose of some knowledge, for it does not know anything, it follows that it shines only upon the material intellect and is light for it and impresses upon it its likeness. . . . (William, *DA* 7.3, Teske 432-3).<sup>21</sup>

Unlike the intrinsic, hidden “full” agent intellect proposed by Bacon, the “empty” agent intellect is an instrumental intellectual light, a power of the soul that does not pre-possess the forms. Like Bacon's intrinsic, full agent intellect, this interpretation could account for the phenomenon that the individual is agent of her own intellect. At the same time, the position also avoids Bacon's proposal to divide the indivisible soul into parts, one hidden beneath the soul's awareness.

However, despite these seeming advantages, William takes this third interpretation to fail in another respect. On William's reading of Aristotelian causation, an empty agent simply could not be the efficient cause of intellection since it would lack the intelligible forms; if it were empty of forms, the agent would then lack the completeness of knowledge that it donates to the material intellect in causing the material intellect to actually think.<sup>22</sup> As William sees it, then, the only agent conceivable as an efficient cause is the “full” agent intellect with all of its untenable implications:

. . . If, then, it impresses knowledge in act upon the material intellect, it is necessary that the agent intellect be knowledge in act or knowing in act through itself and, on this account, knowing all things that are naturally

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<sup>21</sup> William, *DA* 7.3, 207a, Teske 432-3: “*Si quis est non est creatus nisi propter illuminandum materialem; cum in seipso nec sibi luceat ad cognitionem aliquam, cum nihil cognoscat. Quapropter soli intellectui materiali lucet, et ipsi est lux, similitudinemque suam imprimi. . . .*”

<sup>22</sup> See n. 16 above.

knowable. Hence, whether it is the soul itself or a part of it or a habit, it is necessary that the human soul through itself or in accord with it know everything that is naturally knowable, since it naturally has in itself the knowledge in act of everything knowable of this sort (William, *DA* 7.3, Teske 432-3).<sup>23</sup>

To clarify his argument that an “empty” agent is simply a contradiction in terms, William attacks the Peripatetic use of Aristotle’s analogy between sunlight and the agent intellect. Beginning from within a Peripatetic account of vision, William explains that the different colors exist as such regardless of whether light is or is not present: “And [it is obvious] that it is not true that colors do not exist at night, unless colors are understood as I have said, namely, as reflections mixed from the dispositions of bodies, which they call “potential” colors, and from the light cast upon bodies” (William, *DA* 7.3, Teske 434).<sup>24</sup> In William’s clarification, the role of light is simply to transfer the already-existing act of the determinate colors to the eye by increasing their strength to the degree required to impress the eye: “But in every colored body there is in actuality that disposition which they want to be color in potency, which is undoubtedly so thin and weak

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<sup>23</sup> William, *DA* 7.3, 207a: “. . . *Si igitur scientiam in effectu imprimit intellectui materiali; necesse est ipsum intellectum agentem esse scientiam in effectu vel scientem in effectu per semetipsum; et propter hoc scientem omnium naturaliter scibilium. Quapropter si vel ipsa anima est, vel pars ejus, sive habitus, necesse est ipsam animam humanam per ipsum sive secundum ipsum scientem esse omnium naturaliter scibilium; cum in seipsa naturaliter habeat scientiam in effectu omnium hujusmodi scibilium.*”

<sup>24</sup> William, *DA* 7.4, 207b: “*Et quonia non est verum colores non esse de nocte, nisi colores intelligunt quemadmodum dixi, videlicet reflexiones mixtas ex dispositionibus corporum, quas ipsi vocant colores scilicet potenciales, et lumine corporibus superperso.*” Although the question to what thinker William refers here is beyond the scope of my present argument, it is possible that William has in mind Avicenna’s account of vision, as expounded in *The Cure*, and summarized in McGinnis, *Avicenna*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 104-107. While asserting, against the traditional Aristotelian account, that the transparent is always actual, Avicenna also maintains that “in those bodies that are not luminous, and so not visible in themselves, a radiant light coming from a luminous body must fall upon them and blend or mix with the potential color or disposition in the body. The resultant of this mingling of radiant light and potential color is for Avicenna what one, then, perceives as the actual perceptible color” (McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 107). I need to check these page numbers against the hard copy. The parallel I see is that both in William and Avicenna, the colour by itself has a determination as ‘this colour,’ or ‘that colour,’ but requires the boost provided by light if it is to be actually visible.

that only by the help of the light poured out upon it is it able to act upon the organ of sight” (William, *DA* 7.4, Teske 434).<sup>25</sup> When it comes to the material intellect’s acquiring knowledge of the intelligibles, however, this analogy to visible light is misleading as the agent intellect’s role is not simply to transfer to the material intellect intelligibles that are independently in act by boosting the force of their existing activity. To suppose that the activating power (the agent intellect) could be separated from what is in act (the intelligible form) suggests that the intelligibles are already in act without the agent intellect, a feature that would render the agent intellect redundant and therefore unnecessary:

Moreover, if between the senses and the sensibles there is no need of an intermediate power of acting upon the senses that would make the sensed sensibles, which are in potency in the organs of the senses, to proceed into act and to be in act, but the external sensible things are sufficient for this, how are the intelligibles not sufficient for impressing their intelligible likenesses upon the material intellect? To put this more clearly, just as there is no agent sense, if I may say this, between the sensible and the sense, so it is not necessary that there be an agent intellect between intelligibles and the material intellect” (William, *DA* 7.4, Teske 434).<sup>26</sup>

In William’s analysis, the Peripatetic argument must maintain that the intelligibles are actually intelligible only so far as they are within the agent intellect. In other words, the “light” of the agent intellect is itself inseparable from the actually-being-thought-intelligibles, i.e. from the concrete intelligibility of the intelligibles:

Hence, it is necessary that those things that come from the agent intellect into the material intellect be complete sciences, since they cannot be parts of them, and nothing else whatsoever can come from it into the material intellect. And thus the example of the sun or of its rays upon colored bodies

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<sup>25</sup> William, *DA* 7.4, 207a: “[I]n corpore vero omni colorato actualiter est dispositio illa quam volunt colorem potentia, quae proculdubio adeo tenuis est, et debilis, ut nonnisi adjutorio supereffusi luminis in instrumentum visus agere sufficiat.”

<sup>26</sup> William, *DA* 7.4, 207b: “Amplius si inter sensus, et sensibilia non est necessaria virtus media agens in sensus quae faciat sensata sensibilia que potentia sunt in organis sensuum exire in effectum, et ea esse in effectu: sed ad hoc sufficiunt sensibilia quae extra sunt. Quomodo non sufficient intelligibilia ad imprimendas similitudines suas intelligibiles in intellectum materialem: et ut clarius hoc dicatur sicut non est sensus agens, ut ita dicatur inter sensibilia et sensum medius, ita non est necesse ut sit intellectus agens inter intelligibilia, et intellectam materialem.”

or colors has no place here, since it is obvious that the rays from the sun or its light upon bodies are not color (William, *DA* 7.4, Teske 434).<sup>27</sup>

As I have indicated above, the upshot of William's understanding of Aristotelian activity requires that the agent intellect be full of forms in the sense that it is a thinker thinking them continuously:

Moreover, how or for what reason is it called the agent intellect if it does not understand through itself and no other intellect understands by it or through it? And I understand "by it" formally. For only irrationally or falsely can something be called knowledge that itself does not know, and nothing else knows by it or through it formally. So too, something cannot be called whiteness truly and properly that is itself not white, and nothing else is white by participation in it.<sup>28</sup>

Since it would itself lack the intelligible form, an empty agent intellect would be unable to impress the knowledge-in-act of that form on the material intellect (and thus cause the material intellect also to know). William therefore rejects the interpretation of Aristotle's noetic as proposing an intrinsic, empty agent intellect.

### Albert's Reply

I now turn to Albert's *De homine*, the title that the recently-published Aschendorf Verlag critical edition gives to the second half of Albert's *Summa de creaturis*. Since Albert was in Paris from ~1242-1248, during which time he composed the *De homine*,<sup>29</sup> the setting allows that Albert

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<sup>27</sup> William, *DA* 7.4, 207b: "*Quare necesse est ea quae ab intellectu agente veniunt in intellectum materialem scientias esse completas, cum partes earum esse non possint, nec omnino aliud venire ab eo in intellectum materialem, et ita non habet locum exemplum solis, sive irradiationis ejus ad corpora colorata et colorem; cum manifestum sit irradiationem a sole vel luce ejus super corpora non esse colorem.*"

<sup>28</sup> 7.4, Teske 435, 207b: "*Amplius quomodo et qua de causa nominator intellectus agens si nec ipse intelligat per semetipsum, nec alius eo, sive per illum, et intelligo eo formaliter: non enim nominari potest nisi irrationabiliter, et false scientia quae nec sit, nec alius est sciens ipsas, sive per ipsam formaliter: quemadmodum albedo nominari non potest vere vel proprie quod nec albet, nec aliud participatione ipsius.*"

<sup>29</sup> Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (REP) 1998, s.v. "Albert the Great (1200-80)," by Alain de Libera, translated by Claudia Eisen Murphy, accessed November 08, 2015, <https://www-rep-routledge-com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/articles/albert-the-great-1200-80/v-1/introduction-of-philosophy-to-the-latins>, maintains that, "Albert's teaching in Paris was dominated by his writing the *Summa de creaturis* (Book of the Creatures) before 1246."



could have had direct access to William's criticisms, which, as outlined above, were published in Paris in 1240. In looking at the portion of Albert's *De homine* that analyzes the agent intellect, I aim to show that Albert's defense of the third interpretation outlined above is directed against objections that are identifiable as William's. I argue that Albert defends his interpretation against William by interpreting the agent intellect as what I will label a "limit concept."

Albert outlines his interpretation of the agent intellect in article three of his treatment of the agent intellect, which asks whether the agent intellect is a separate intelligence or not. His answer in the *solutio* is that "the human agent intellect is conjoined to the human soul, and is simple and does not have intelligibles, but acts itself on the possible intellect from the phantasms, just as Averroes says in his *De anima Commentary*."<sup>30</sup> Although I do not have enough room to explore the ramifications of the link to Averroes, it is noteworthy that Albert draws on the Arabic Commentator's account of Aristotelian activity to maintain that there can be an "empty" agent that is a legitimate efficient cause of intellection.<sup>31</sup> In objection fourteen of the same article, Albert outlines what I take to be the larger argument of William's criticism of every interpretation of the agent intellect: The Aristotelian agent intellect fails to explain the agency of

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<sup>30</sup> Albert the Great, *De homine (DH), De anima rationali, Vires apprehensivae*, 2.2.3. *Utrum intellectus agens sit intelligentia separata vel non, Solutio*, vol. XXVII, Pars II of *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia edenda curavit Institutum Alberti Magni Coloniense Bernharo Geyer praeside* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951-), 412.72-76: "[D]icimus intellectum agentem humanum esse coniunctum animae humanae, et esse simplicem et non habere intelligibilia, sed agere ipsa in intellectu possibili ex phantasmatis, sicut expresse dicit Averroes in commento libri de anima." Subsequent references to Albert's text are to the Cologne edition. All translations of Albert's Latin are my own.

<sup>31</sup> For a helpful analysis of Albert's adoption of Avicenna's account of pre-intellectual abstraction and Averroes' account of intellectual abstraction, see Richard Taylor, "Albert the Great's Account of Human Knowledge in his *De homine*: A Concoction Formed From the Writings of Avicenna and Averroes" (conference paper, DWMC, KU Leuven 5 June 2012), accessed November 8, 2015,

[http://academic.mu.edu/taylorr/Research\\_&Teaching/Draft\\_Taylor\\_Leuven\\_5\\_June\\_2012.html](http://academic.mu.edu/taylorr/Research_&Teaching/Draft_Taylor_Leuven_5_June_2012.html), esp. §'s 2.3, 2.4, 4.3, and 4.4. Taylor argues, interestingly, that the portion of Albert's noetic drawn from Averroes is a mis-reading of Averroes' study of Farabi, acknowledging that Albert's goal was to "to conciliate [Aristotle's *De Anima*] with fundamental Christian doctrines and the teachings of Augustine" (§2.4).

individual thought because if it is to be an effective cause of intellection, the agent would have to already possess all intelligible forms, and would thus be a separate intelligence. Albert's formulation of William's position is more systematic than William's own, but begins from William's two possible causal elements: (i.) the agent intellect's essence, or else (ii.) the intelligible forms present within the agent intellect:<sup>32</sup>

The agent intellect either acts on the possible [i.] by the action of its own substance, or [ii.] [by the action] of some form existing in itself. If in the first way [i.], since by its own substance it is itself one thing, it would not make an action in the possible intellect unless in [only] one way, being itself [that] one thing, which is manifestly false since there are many intelligibles according to which the possible intellect is activated. . . .<sup>33</sup>

The second sentence invokes Aristotle's insight that precisely in order to explain how, in discursive thinking the learner's intellect possesses a plasticity that becomes, and thereby knows all things, the possible intellect cannot itself be any one of these intelligibles.<sup>34</sup> Since the role of the agent intellect is to activate within the material intellect any of the full set of

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<sup>32</sup> See William, *DA* 7.3, as cited in n. 15 above. William uses slightly different language than Albert, but I take [i.] in that passage to be the agent intellect's essence, understood as some singular thing distinct from [ii.] the intelligibles taken as knowledge-in-act, or some kind of accident of the agent intellect's essence as conceived in [i.].

<sup>33</sup> Albert, *DH*, *Vires apprehensivae*, 2.2.3, Obj. 14, 409.58-65: "*Fortius autem ad idem obicitur sic: Intellectus agens aut agit in possibilem actione suae substantiae, aut alicuius formae existentis in ipso. Si primo modo, cum sua substantia sit eodem modo se habens et una, non faceret in possibili actionem nisi uno modo se habentem et unam, quod manifeste falsum est, cum sint multa intelligibilia secundum quae intellectus possibilis efficitur in actu. . . .*" I discuss Albert's argument regarding [ii] below.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. William's iteration of this premise at *DA* 7.4, 207a, Teske 433-4: "For the material intellect by itself has in actuality no disposition except receptivity alone [*intellectui namque materiali secundum se nulla dispositio est actualiter nisi sola receptibilitate*]." Both thinkers are referring to Aristotle's *De anima* 429a 18-24: "*Oportet igitur si intelligit omnia ut sit non mixtum, sicut dixit Anaxagoras ut imperet, scilicet ut cognoscat. Si enim in eo apparuerit apparens impedit alienum, quia est aliud. Et sic non habebit naturam nisi istam scilicet quod est possibilis. Illud igitur de anima quod dicitur intellectus (et dico intellectum illud per quod distinguimus et cogitamus) non est in actu aliquod entium antequam intelligat.*" (Aristoteles, *De anima in Averrois Cordubensis, commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford [Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1953]), pp. 383 and 387).

intelligibles, there is a correlative requirement that the causal impression made on the material intellect by the agent intellect also be unrestricted to any one determinate intelligible like the agent intellect's own single essence.<sup>35</sup> Otherwise, one could not explain the thinking of anything other than that single essence. I have indicated above that William does initially distinguish between (i.) and (ii.), but quickly collapses this distinction because legitimate causation requires the agent intellect to give to the material intellect knowledge-already-in-act, a self-complete activity of thinking that does not permit a distinction between what thinks (the agent intellect's essence) and what is thought (the intelligible form).<sup>36</sup> Albert's objection analyzes this distinction, specifying the Aristotelian reason why the agent intellect's single essence, taken alone, is insufficient to cause intellection, thus making William's objection more thorough. After demonstrating that the agent intellect's essence, understood as one determinate form, cannot cause intellection, the objection then turns to consider (ii.), an agent intellect that shapes the possible intellect by donating in one way or another the forms that it possesses:

. . . If in the second way [ii.], then the agent intellect will have species and forms of all intelligibles, since according to one species it could not activate diverse intelligibles; therefore it will have in its power the specific intelligibles [*specialitates*=special qualities] and the general intelligibles [*generalitates*] of all things. Therefore, either [a] it has them through receiving, so that at some time it will not have [them], or [b] it is and was always in act according to them. If in the first way [a], then the agent intellect would be in potency and would not differ from the possible intellect. If in the second way, then the agent intellect will be an intelligence full with more and less universal forms [i.e. the *specialitates* and *generalitates* mentioned above]. Since, therefore this is fitting of the separate intelligence, the agent intellect will be a separate intelligence.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. n. 34. The correlative point that Albert makes about the agent intellect can be supported by Aristotle, *DA* 430 a17-18, Crawford 440: "*Et iste intellectus etiam est abstractus non mixtus neque passibilis, et est in sua substantia actio.*"

<sup>36</sup> See Teske 432, 206b, as cited above in n. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Albert, *DH, Vires apprehensivae*, 2.2.3, Obj. 14, 409.65-76: ". . . *Si secundo modo, tunc intellectus agens habebit species et formas omnium intelligibilium, quia secundum unam speciem non posset agere diversa intelligibilia; ergo habebit penes se specialitates et generalitates omnium rerum. Aut igitur habet eas per acceptionem, ita quod quandoque non habuerit, aut semper est et fuit in actu secundum ipsas. Si primo modo, tunc intellectus agens esset in potentia et non differret a possibili. Si secundo modo, tunc intellectus agens erit intelligentia plena formis minus et magis universalibus. Cum igitur hoc sit proprium intelligentiae separatae, intellectus agens erit intelligentia separata.*"

This part of objection 14 follows the same logical sequence in William's *De anima* text, arriving at the same conclusion: Only an agent that pre-possesses all the forms can cause intellection, and this kind of agent cannot be within the soul. The objection first describes what I have labelled an "empty" agent intellect that, although not specified by Albert, might be within the soul, i.e. one that does not pre-possess the forms, but itself receives them. The problem with interpretation (ii.a) is that it would identify the agent intellect with the material intellect, which is also William's argument.<sup>38</sup> As I have illustrated, from William's standpoint it follows that in proposing an agent intellect, one must be proposing interpretation (ii.b), the proposal that the agent intellect is extrinsic and "full."<sup>39</sup> Note that in arriving at this conclusion, Albert's objection fourteen presents every step in William's argument, including William's conclusion that each interpretation of the agent intellect fails to support the premise that the individual causes his own thinking: (i.), that the agent intellect causes by its own essence, taken as something other than knowledge in act, (ii.a), that the "empty" agent intellect first receives and then passes on the intelligible forms to the material intellect, and (ii.b), that the "full" agent causes by impressing the intelligible forms, but this agent must be conceived as an intelligence, existing outside the soul.

Objection seventeen in Albert's text provides a more complete defense of William's conclusion that, since receptivity and Aristotelian activity are mutually exclusive, and since the agent donates understanding-in-act, interpretation (ii.b) is the only tenable interpretation of the agent of human thinking:

[1] Everything that receives something is in potentiality to that thing.

[2] The agent intellect is not in potentiality to anything because it is an agent, universally speaking.

[C<sub>1</sub>] Therefore, the agent intellect does not receive anything. Thence it follows that:

[3] Everything that does not receive something to be understood [i.e. an intelligible form] understands by an understanding not caused by [extrinsic] things.

[4] The agent intellect does not receive anything to be understood [i.e. any intelligible form].

[C<sub>2</sub>] Therefore, it understands by an understanding not caused by [extrinsic] things.

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<sup>38</sup> See William, *DA* 7.3, as cited in n. 16 above.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. n. 23 above.

But, . . .

[5] Everything that understands by an understanding not caused by [extrinsic] things is an intelligence and separate substance.

[6] The agent intellect understands in this fashion;

[C<sub>3</sub>] Therefore, the agent intellect is an intelligence and a separate substance.

The first [premise] of this last syllogism is proved from this [premise], that the rational soul is not in the body unless it is perfected by science and virtue, as the saints and philosophers say. The second [premise] is proved in the preceding syllogisms. Truly, the propositions of the preceding syllogisms are evident.<sup>40</sup>

This argument also supports William's conclusion that (ii.b) is the only tenable interpretation of the agent intellect by focusing on the difference between, on the one hand, human thinking, which is partial and discursive, and thus dependent on extrinsic causation and, on the other hand, the intellectual activity of the agent intellect. The argument implies that the

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<sup>40</sup> Albert, *DH, Vires apprehensivae*, 2.2.3, Obj. 17, 410.28-43: "[1] *Omne quod recipit aliquid, est in potentia ad illud*; [2] *intellectus agens non est in potentia ad aliquid, eo quod ipse est agens universaliter*; ergo [C<sub>1</sub>] *intellectus agens non recipit aliquid. Inde sic*: [3] *Omne quod non recipit aliquid intelligendo, intelligit intellectu non causato a rebus*; [4] *intellectus agens non recipit aliquid intelligendo*; ergo [C<sub>2</sub>] *intelligit intellectu non causato a rebus*; [5] *sed omne quod intelligit intellectu non causato a rebus est intelligentia et substantia separata*; [6] *intellectus agens sic intelligit*; ergo [C<sub>3</sub>] *intellectus agens est intelligentia et substantia separata. Prima huius ultimi syllogismi probatur ex hoc quod anima rationalis non est in corpore nisi ut perficiatur scientia et virtute, ut dicunt sancti et philosophi. Secunda vero probatur in syllogismis praecedentibus. Propositiones vero syllogismorum praecedentium per se sunt manifestae.*" The argument of *DH, Vires apprehensivae*, 2.2.6, Obj. 1, 420.1-7 re-iterates William's assumption that, when it is applied to intellection, Aristotelian activity logically requires the agent intellect to be a thinker continuously thinking the forms: "[7] Every intellect [that is] understanding understands something. [8] The agent intellect understands. [C<sub>4</sub>] Therefore, it understands something. The first [premise] is proved from this, that every understanding is of something intelligible. The second [premise], however, is written in *De anima* 3, where the Philosopher says that the agent intellect 'does not sometimes understand and sometimes not,' meaning through this that it always understands." The Latin text is: "[7] *Omnis intellectus intelligens aliquid intelligit*; [8] *intellectus agens intelligit*; [C<sub>4</sub>] *ergo aliquid intelligit. Prima probatur ex hoc quod omnis intellectus est alicuius intelligibilis. Secunda vero scribitur in tertio de anima, ubi dicit Philosophus quod intellectus agens 'non quandoque intelligit et quandoque non', innuens per hoc quod semper intelligat.*"

agent intellect's activity is self-complete repeatedly denying that it is caused by anything extrinsic. Premise (5), supported by the final paragraph's note that incarnate intelligence is marked by discursive improvement in science and virtue, is logically identical to William's argument that to posit a "full" intrinsic agent intellect is contrary to our experience of our thinking, which we experience as proceeding discursively, part by part, rather than as a continuous knowing of all things.<sup>41</sup> Premise (6), supported by the preceding premises, denies any extrinsic causation, and therefore implies William's argument that the agent intellect would have to already possess the full set of intelligibles as continuously being thought.

To judge from Albert's responses, I suggest that he sees the rejection of (ii.a) as deriving from William's flawed interpretation of the agent intellect's activity. William's interpretation leads him from the correct minor premise (2) and the correct conclusion (C<sub>1</sub>) to infer premise (6), which states that the agent intellect must be a thinker, a thing that thinks. Indeed, when interpreting the agent intellect's activity as he does, William must conclude that (ii.a) is untenable. However, Albert's ad 14 defends (ii.a) by proposing a different interpretation of the agent's activity than William's, one that is simple<sup>42</sup> and oriented towards the phantasms:

The agent intellect acts through its own substance and not through some intelligible species that it has within itself. . . . For the act of the agent intellect is determined toward the phantasms [*determinatur ad phantasma*], and so determined, it moves the possible intellect and leads it out into act, just as the action of light is determined toward colours [*determinatur ad colores*], and so determined, leads vision out into act. And through this it is clear that the agent intellect is not a separate substance, full with forms.<sup>43</sup>

On the one hand, this account of a "simple" agent intellect, whose act is outwardly-directed, complements Albert's claim, also in ad 14, that the "diversity of actions of the agent intellect comes from the phantasms and

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. n. 23 above.

<sup>42</sup> See n. 30 above.

<sup>43</sup> Albert, *DH, Vires apprehensivae*, 2.2.3, ad 14, 414.22-38: "[I]ntellectus agens agit per suam substantiam et non per aliquam speciem intelligibilem, quam habeat apud se. . . . Actio enim intellectus agentis determinatur ad phantasma, et sic determinata movet intellectum possibilem et educit eum in actum, sicut actio luminis determinatur ad colores, et sic determinata visum educit in actum. Et per hoc patet quod intellectus agens non est substantia separata plena formis."