

## Aristotle on God and the Human Intellect

Professor James Duerlinger<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

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In *DA III 4–5* Aristotle explains what he believes to be the essential and necessary properties of the part of a soul with which it thinks intelligible forms. This is the part he calls the intellect (*nous*). My main concern in this essay is to translate and explain what Aristotle says in *DA III 5* about God and the intellect, but since what he says in *DA III 5* is a logical continuation of what he says in *DA III 4*, I will first explain what he says in *DA III 4* from the perspective of its relation to what he says in *DA III 5*.

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### Introduction<sup>i</sup>

In *DA III 4–5* Aristotle explains what he believes to be the essential and necessary properties of the part of a soul with which it thinks intelligible forms. This is the part he calls the intellect (*nous*). My main concern in this essay is to translate and explain what Aristotle says in *DA III 5* about God and the intellect, but since what he says in *DA III 5* is a logical continuation of what he says in *DA III 4*, I will first explain what he says in *DA III 4* from the perspective of its relation to what he says in *DA III 5*. In his account of the human intellect Aristotle concisely expresses himself in sentences whose full meanings and/or connections to sentences before or after them are not always apparent.<sup>ii</sup> Since this problematic circumstance is especially acute in *DA III 5*, I will translate its seventeen sentences and add in brackets what I believe will help readers to understand their fuller meanings and connections to one another.<sup>iii</sup> My special concern is to explain what Aristotle says by using only terms he himself uses in his treatises. In this introduction, I explain the terminology of Aristotle I use in my analysis of his account of the agent intellect and introduce my main theses concerning the relationship between the agent intellect and the other intellect to which Aristotle refers in *DA III 5*. In the second part of this essay, I briefly explain what Aristotle says in *DA III 4* with special attention to its relation to what he says in *DA III 5*, and in the third I translate and comment upon *DA III 5* as his account of why we can think.

Although Aristotle does not in *DA III 5* say what it is he intends to be discussing there, he does so, I believe, at the beginning of *DA III 4*,<sup>iv</sup> where he says, "About the part of the soul with which the soul knows and judges [things]. . . , we must consider what its difference is [from the part of the soul with which the soul senses things] and how thinking comes to be." Since Aristotle assumes that the soul knows and judges things by means of thinking (*noēsis*), in *DA III 4* he explains the difference between the part of the soul with which it thinks and the part of the soul with which it senses, and in *DA III 5* he explains how thinking comes to be.<sup>v</sup> The part of the soul he calls an intellect I will call the human intellect to distinguish it from the divine intellect that Aristotle discusses in *M XII 7*, 9–10. Since the human intellect is the power of the human soul not only to think an intelligible object (*noēton*) by means of a concept (*noēma*)<sup>vi</sup> but also to combine concepts to think something about a subject, I will distinguish the soul conceiving an intelligible object from it thinking about an object it conceives. An intelligible object is a form that can be discriminated by the human intellect. Aristotle believes that sense (*aisthēsis*) discriminates sensible forms that have been imprinted on the sensing part of the soul and the intellect discriminates intelligible forms that have been imprinted on the thinking part of the soul. So I will often call an intelligible object an intelligible form to distinguish it from a sensible form. An intelligible form is an essence, which is a differentiated genus to which something belongs.<sup>vii</sup> In *DA III 4–5* Aristotle discusses only the power of the human soul to conceive intelligible forms.

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<sup>1</sup>Philosophy Department, University of Iowa, USA. E-mail: [james-duerlinger@uiowa.edu](mailto:james-duerlinger@uiowa.edu)

The first actuality of the power to conceive an intelligible form is the human soul receiving a likeness of the form.<sup>viii</sup> A likeness of an intelligible form is the affection or impression (*pathēma*) in the soul.<sup>ix</sup> Aristotle calls a concept (*noēma*).<sup>x</sup> We may infer, from his claim that the human intellect is “actually none of the things [it thinks] prior to thinking [them],”<sup>xi</sup> that he believes that the human intellect is like a formless matter that receives as forms the concepts of intelligible forms. So when the human intellect thinks intelligible forms it receives as its form concepts of intelligible forms. The human intellect receiving as its form concepts of intelligible forms, however, is not the same as it thinking the intelligible forms with the concepts it has received as its form. The human intellect receiving as its form concepts of intelligible forms is the human intellect becoming concepts of intelligible forms in the way matter receives form. The human intellect becoming concepts of intelligible forms is the first actuality of its power to conceive the forms and it conceiving the forms is its second actuality.<sup>xii</sup> In *DA III 5* Aristotle argues that present in the human soul there is another intellect that acts on the human intellect to produce thinking. The thinking it produces is the conceiving of intelligible forms. The intellect that produces thinking I call the agent intellect because it acts upon the other intellect, not because it acts upon intelligible forms or concepts, as commentators have mistakenly assumed. The intellect upon which it acts is the human intellect having become a concept of intelligible objects — the human intellect in its first actuality. The agent intellect causes the human intellect in its first actuality to achieve its second actuality of conceiving intelligible objects by means of concepts the human intellect has become.

Aristotle says that the agent intellect is in the human soul, but he believes that it is distinct from the human intellect, which is the power to conceive intelligible objects. As an agent acting upon the human intellect having become concepts, Aristotle assumes, the agent intellect imposes a form it possesses by its own nature upon the human intellect having become concepts so that the human intellect can think the intelligible form it has become. What exactly the agent intellect is and what the form is that it imposes upon the human intellect having become concepts is what I hope to explain. The thinking Aristotle discusses in *DA III 4–5* is the simple act of the human intellect discriminating an intelligible form.<sup>xiii</sup> In general the discrimination of a form is an awareness of this form. The awareness of a form by the human intellect is a conceptual awareness. In *DA III 6* Aristotle says that the form discriminated is indivisible,<sup>xiv</sup> which means that it is not divisible into parts one of which is said of another.<sup>xv</sup> When in this essay I refer to thinking, I mean only this simple act of thinking, not the act of thinking that in *DA III 6* Aristotle says is the combining of concepts that makes thoughts that are true or false.<sup>xvi</sup> The simple act of thinking is the conceiving of an intelligible object. There are two kinds of intelligible objects that Aristotle distinguishes: an intelligible object with matter and an intelligible form without matter.<sup>xvii</sup> The first, according to Aristotle, is a potential intelligible object.<sup>xviii</sup> He says that an intelligible object with matter is thought by the human intellect without its matter, and that when it is, it is an actual intelligible object. Among intelligible objects without matter Aristotle recognizes a divine intellect, celestial intellects,<sup>xix</sup> and a human intellect in its first actuality. He says that the human intellect thinks intelligible objects with matter without their matter.<sup>xx</sup> In *DA III 4–5* Aristotle discusses only the human intellect thinking forms present in matter without their matter.<sup>xxi</sup>

The conceiving of an intelligible object is the basic act of the human intellect whose content is the content of the act, as opposed to its intelligible object. Since in the simple act of the human intellect thinking a form, in addition, neither the content nor the object of the act of thinking is divisible into parts, one of which is said of the other, the thinking cannot be false.<sup>xxii</sup> The form of an intelligible object with matter is the form of a sensible object. When the sensible object is perceived, an image (*phantasma*) containing its form arises in the human soul.<sup>xxiii</sup> Aristotle believes that if the human intellect is to think the form in the image it needs to become the concept of the form.<sup>xxiv</sup> The human intellect does not come to be a concept of a form in an image unless an image containing the form is present before the human intellect.<sup>xxv</sup> An image containing the form arises when we perceive sensible objects in whose matter the form in the image is present.<sup>xxvi</sup> So the form, as it is present in the image, is the form present in matter, and the form, as it is present in the human intellect, is the concept of the form present in matter.<sup>xxvii</sup> Although in *DA III 3* and *DA III 6–8* Aristotle uses the terms translated here as “concept” and “image,” he does not use them in *DA III 4–5*. But I use the terms to reformulate what he says in *DA III 4–5* because doing so will make its meaning clearer for us, since we are more familiar with the use of such terms to explain thought. Aristotle believes that the human intellect comes to possess concepts of forms present in matter when and only when it thinks concepts of forms present in matter.<sup>xxviii</sup> It is primarily because Aristotle believes that the human intellect comes to possess concepts of forms present in matter that he believes that it has access to forms in matter.

Because the human intellect has access to forms present in matter by coming to possess concepts of them, he believes, it can think concepts and can combine concepts to make thoughts that represent the way in which the forms in matter do or do not combine with one another and it can think these thoughts.<sup>xxxix</sup> It is because the human intellect comes to possess concepts of forms when it thinks them that the human intellect is the same as the forms that it thinks.<sup>xxx</sup> When Aristotle says that the human intellect is actually none of the things it thinks prior to thinking,<sup>xxxi</sup> he implies that it does not come to possess concepts of forms present in matter until it thinks the concepts.<sup>xxxii</sup> Even though Aristotle believes that the human intellect comes to be concepts when and only when it thinks concepts, he does not believe that coming to be concepts and thinking concepts are the same in essence, since he seems to think that they have different causes. Below I will explain Aristotle's account of the cause of the human intellect thinking the concepts it comes to be. That he says that the human intellect thinks forms in images and that it does not think without images together suggest that he assumes that forms in images cause the human intellect to think these forms. If this is correct, he also assumes that just as images arise from sense-perception, concepts arise from images, and that just as the sensing part of the soul is caused to come to be sense-impressions of sensible forms by sensible forms in matter, so the human intellect is caused to come to be concepts of intelligible forms by intelligible forms in images.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Aristotle does not say what the conditions are that must be present if forms in images are to cause the human intellect to come to be concepts of the forms. But he does say in the *Posterior Analytics* that the first concepts of forms come to be by means of repeated perceptions of things in which the forms are present,<sup>xxxiv</sup> which suggests that he thinks that the images that arise from perceptions must come to be well-established for the first concepts to arise. Since the human intellect does not always come to be concepts of forms in images when images containing the forms are repeatedly present before the human intellect, other causal conditions must be present for the production of the first concepts, including the social context of language learning. For my purposes, it is enough if it is assumed that Aristotle takes it for granted that it is in the context of concepts being learned that forms in images cause the human intellect to come to be concepts of the forms.

Another reason Aristotle most likely believes that an image containing a form must be present whenever the human intellect comes to be a concept of the form is the belief that a concept of a form in an image is related to the form in the image as a universal is related to a particular of which the universal is predicated, and a universal, even when present in the human intellect, cannot exist apart from particulars. In other words, he may think that concepts are instantiated universals, just as are the universals they represent in the world. In *DA* III 3, Aristotle explains why we can easily think a form of which we already have the concept whenever we wish.<sup>xxxv</sup> He says that "this affection [thinking] is within our power, whenever we wish to be thinking, since we can bring something before our eyes, just as those do who use mnemonic devices and construct sensible images."<sup>xxxvi</sup> Here Aristotle seems to be using an analogy to call our attention to a power he believes we have to bring before the human intellect an image containing a form without which the concept cannot exist.<sup>xxxvii</sup> When we again bring the image containing the form before the human intellect, the human intellect easily thinks the form in the image because the form in the image causes the human intellect again to come to be its concept.<sup>xxxviii</sup> To my knowledge, Aristotle does not give any other account of why we can think a concept we possess whenever we wish. The account, however, is incomplete, since it does not explain why the human intellect thinks the concept it comes to be. Why the human intellect thinks the concept it comes to be Aristotle explains in *DA* III 5.

In my explanation of Aristotle's account of why we can think a concept we possess whenever we wish, I suggested that he thinks that we can do so because we have the power to bring before the human intellect the image containing a form that caused its concept when the concept was being learned. But Aristotle does not anywhere say that a concept of a form in an image is caused by the form in an image that is present. For this reason, commentators have thought that Aristotle may have in mind some other cause for the human intellect becoming a concept. When, in addition, they do not clearly distinguish the human intellect becoming a concept from it thinking a concept, they interpret what Aristotle says in *DA* III 5 as an account of why the human intellect comes to be a concept of a form in an image, assuming that this is also his account of why the human intellect thinks. Aristotle assumes that a concept of a form present in an image is produced in the human intellect by a form in an image that is present,<sup>xxxix</sup> and that in *DA* III 5 he explains how the human intellect thinks a concept it comes to be by positing the existence of an agent intellect that imposes another instance of its own thinking upon the human intellect when the human intellect comes to be a concept.

The human intellect is distinct from the divine intellect, which Aristotle calls God (*theos*) and says is a form that exists by itself, apart from matter, and is in substance an activity. In *M XII* 6–10, he argues that it is the principle upon which depend the movements of the heavens and the nature of things as the highest good, and that its activity is always to think itself, since it is always thinking the best of things, which is itself. It is surely also this same divinity that he claims<sup>xi</sup> to be the end for the sake of which the members of all species of living things reproduce.<sup>xii</sup> It is not clear what sort of thinking Aristotle means to be attributing to the divine intellect. He does not say whether or not it uses a concept to think itself or is a concept that thinks itself. I believe that in fact Aristotle believes that its thinking is an awareness of itself without a concept of itself. The only thing that he says in explanation of the divine intellect thinking itself is that it is “thinking thinking of thinking,”<sup>xiii</sup> the meaning of which is not clear. Many interpretations are possible, all of which would be speculative. Nor do I wish to add a speculative interpretation of my own to my already lengthy speculative interpretation of Aristotle’s account of the human intellect. Suffice it to say that Aristotle’s claim, that the divine intellect is thinking thinking of thinking, does not rule out my account of its thinking as an awareness of itself without a concept of itself. What follows, in any case, is predicated on my own admittedly speculative assumption that his divine intellect thinks itself without a concept of itself. In this regard, my account of *DA III* 5 is no worse off than any other, since all are as speculative as mine is. If self-awareness is what Aristotle means when he refers to the thinking in which the divine intellect engages, he is using the same expression, “thinking” in two different senses when he applies it both to the human intellect thinking a concept of a form in matter and to the divine intellect thinking itself without a concept of itself.<sup>xiiii</sup>

It is highly unlikely that he would use such an important expression in his philosophy in two different senses without realizing that he is doing so. In realizing that he is doing so, he would certainly regard one of the senses of the expression to be basic and the other derivative, since this is how he explains the relationship between important ambiguous but obviously related words he employs in his philosophy.<sup>xiv</sup> He would also most likely say that the expression has its basic sense when applied to the thinking in which the divine intellect engages, and has its derivative sense when applied to the thinking in which the human intellect engages.<sup>xv</sup> Finally, we should expect that there is a place in the *De Anima* in which he implies that the derivation exists. There is a place in which I believe he implies the derivation: it is in *DA III* 5. My argument for the view, that in *DA III* 5 Aristotle implies that the thinking of the human intellect is derived from the thinking of the divine intellect, depends upon the premise that he believes that the human intellect is self-aware when it thinks the concept of a form that is in an image that is present. The argument for the premise is based upon Aristotle’s commitment to the views that the human intellect thinks a concept and is the same as the concept it is thinking. The argument is that since the human intellect is the same as a concept it is thinking and it is thinking the concept, it thinks itself when it thinks the concept. There is, however, a surprising twist to this idea: Aristotle does not believe that the human intellect thinks itself because it thinks a concept with which it is the same, but that the human intellect thinks a concept with which it is the same because it thinks itself. Since in *DA III* 4, I believe, Aristotle refers to his thesis that the human intellect thinks itself in the sense of being aware of itself when it thinks a concept, and then considers and replies to an objection to the thesis, I will integrate an explanation of the reference and the consideration of the objection into my interpretation of his account of the differentia of the thinking part of the soul.

#### **Aristotle’s Account of the Human Intellect in *DA III* 4**

In *DA III* 4, Aristotle explains how the human intellect differs from the other part of the human soul that discriminates forms, the sensing part of the human soul.<sup>xvi</sup> Although in this chapter Aristotle differentiates the human intellect from the sensing part of the soul, I believe that the relation between the human intellect and the divine intellect is never far from his mind.<sup>xvii</sup> In my account of *DA III* 4–5, I will show where I believe he makes reference to the divine intellect. That he alludes to the divine intellect rather than openly discussing it I will explain by a commitment he has to keeping his *De Anima* account of the human intellect within the confines of the science of psychology. Aristotle begins by saying that the human intellect, like the sensing part of the soul, is a power to become a form without being altered by it in the way a complex of form and matter is altered by a form that affects it, which is by the destruction of a contrary form.<sup>xviii</sup> The human intellect is the power of the soul to become an intelligible form present in an image that has arisen from sensing sensible forms.

If we interpret Aristotle's claim that the human intellect becomes an intelligible form present in an image in terms of Aristotle's use of *noēma* to refer to a concept, we can say that for him the soul becoming an intelligible form is the soul becoming a concept of that form. A concept is an actual intelligible form of an object, whose own intelligible form Aristotle calls both a potential intelligible form and an enmattered intelligible form. To think an intelligible form, therefore, is to think an enmattered intelligible form by means of thinking its concept, which is thinking an intelligible form without its matter. When an image containing a form is established in the soul and we call up the image, according to Aristotle, the image causes the intellect to become a concept of the intelligible form it contains. But for the intellect to become a concept of the intelligible form it contains is not the same as the intellect thinking the intelligible form by means of thinking its concept. Aristotle says that the human intellect is potentially a form it discriminates, similar to the way in which the sensing part of the soul is potentially a form it discriminates.<sup>xlix</sup> He believes that both the human intellect and the sensing parts of the soul are potentially the forms they discriminate because they are the parts of the human soul that can become forms without the matter in which they are present. The discrimination in both cases is the soul being aware of a form without the matter in which it is present. He compares the way in which the sensing part of the soul becomes a form without its matter to the way in which wax becomes the impression of a signet-ring without the iron or gold of which the ring is composed.<sup>i</sup> Since in both cases, the form is indivisible, the discrimination of the form present in matter is unerring.<sup>ii</sup> After calling attention to how the human intellect is like the sensing part of the soul, Aristotle explains four ways in which the human intellect is differentiated from the sensing part of the soul. Since some of his explanations are concise and omit details, and others are drawn out, I will present them succinctly in my account as statements of its differences so we can see how he is in fact setting out four ways in which it differs from the other part of the soul that discriminates forms. I will, however, elaborate on the statements of differences that directly pertain to my interpretation of *DA* III 5.

The first way in which the human intellect differs is that it does not, as the sensing part of the soul does, require a bodily organ in order to discriminate a form without its matter, since the use of a bodily organ would prevent it from discriminating, as it can, all intelligible forms.<sup>iii</sup> Aristotle draws, as a corollary of this difference, that there is a way in which the traditional view, that the soul is the place of forms, is true.<sup>iiii</sup> The second way in which it is different follows from the first. It is that because the thinking part of the soul does not employ a bodily organ, it is better able to think a form after it thinks a highly intelligible object, but the sensing part of the human soul, which employs a bodily organ, is less able or not able at all to sense a sensible object after it senses a powerful object such as a very loud sound, which affects the organ of hearing. This difference is meant to show us that there is a difference in the way the soul is affected in each case.<sup>liv</sup> The third way in which human intellect differs from the sensing part is that after the human intellect becomes a form without its matter,<sup>lv</sup> it is still in a sense a potentiality, though not in the way it was before it became the form, since when it became a form, a concept of the form was produced and in some sense retained for use again to think the form.<sup>lvi</sup> In this way, the human intellect is different from the sensing part of the soul, which does not in any sense retain a sense-impression of a form it comes to be for use again to sense a form.<sup>lvii</sup> Aristotle says that after the human intellect has acquired concepts and is capable of thinking by itself in the way a scientist is capable of exercising his knowledge by himself, the human intellect "is capable of thinking itself." The meaning of the human intellect being capable of thinking itself, I believe, is that it can be aware of itself because it can think a concept.

It is aware of itself at this time because thinking the concept of a form is an awareness of a form present in matter without its matter, and the human intellect is the same as the form without its matter. The human intellect can be aware of itself because it has come to be a concept of a form present in matter. Prior to becoming a concept of a form present in matter, it could not be aware of itself, since at that time it is just a potentiality to be a concept being thought. If what Aristotle meant were that the human intellect is capable of thinking a concept of itself, he is more likely to have said that when the human intellect has acquired a concept of itself, it can think itself. Instead, he says that the human intellect can think itself when the human intellect comes to be concepts with which to think. Aristotle adds that at this time the human intellect can think itself, I believe, because he wants to call our attention to the way in which the human intellect is like the divine intellect. In *DA* III 4, after completing his account of how the human intellect differs from the sensing part of the soul, he will raise and reply to an objection to his claim that the human intellect can think itself at this time. When he presents his reply to the objection, I will argue, he implies that both the human intellect and the divine intellect think themselves in the same way. Each thinks itself, I claim, in the sense that it is aware of itself when it thinks. The fourth way in which human intellect is different from the sensing part is that what the human intellect discriminates is different from what the sensing part of the soul discriminates.

What is discriminated by the human intellect, for instance, is an essence of a particular thing, while what is discriminated by the sensing part of the soul is a proper sensible form or a particular sensible thing that possesses an essence.<sup>lviii</sup> In *DA* III 4, Aristotle completes his account of the differentia of the human intellect by posing and replying to two objections.<sup>lix</sup> The first objection is that his account of the human intellect implies that it cannot think, since thinking cannot occur unless the human intellect is affected by the form it thinks, which implies that it loses another form, and he said that the human intellect is not affected and has nothing in common with what affects it, unlike other things that are affected.<sup>lx</sup> The second objection concerns Aristotle's claim that the human intellect can think itself. Since Aristotle's statement of the second objection is compressed, I will place it in quotation marks and supplement the quoted objection with bracketed words that more clearly set out what I believe he means. His claim, that the human intellect can think itself, is expressed as the claim that it can be an intelligible object "not in relation to something else," which I interpret to mean "not in relation to something else that thinks it." Aristotle assumes, without explicitly saying that he is doing so, that the human intellect is an intelligible object either not in relation to something else that thinks it or in relation to something else that thinks it. The objection is that "if it [the human intellect] is an intelligible object not in relation to something else" [that thinks it, but by thinking itself,] "and if an intelligible object is one in species," [which implies that if the human intellect thinks itself, all intelligible objects think themselves,] "then it [the human intellect] will be the other things" [that are intelligible objects, making them all be intellects, which is false], "or it will be blended with something that makes it an intelligible object, like other things" [are, making it an intelligible object by being thought by something else, which contradicts the claim that it thinks itself].<sup>lxi</sup>

In this objection, an intelligible object not in relation to something else could be an intelligible object that thinks itself by thinking its concept, but I believe that it is an intelligible object that thinks itself by being aware of itself without thinking a concept of itself. It is this second kind of thinking of itself to which I assume Aristotle is referring in his third account of how the human intellect differs from the sensing part of the human soul. I will also argue below that a comment Aristotle makes in his reply to the second objection suggests that this is what he has in mind. Aristotle introduces the first objection in order to show that thinking can come to be before explaining, in *DA* III 5, how it comes to be. Thinking can come to be, he argues, since the human intellect is not affected by a form it thinks in the way in which something is affected and loses a form it already possesses when it is affected by a form. The way in which the human intellect is affected is by the potentiality it has to come to be forms, none of which it actually possesses, being actualized. He says that the human intellect is potentially the forms it comes to be in the way a blank tablet is potentially the written letters it receives.<sup>lxii</sup> The point Aristotle surely means to be making is that the potentiality of the human intellect to receive forms is like the potentiality of a blank tablet to receive written letters. Hence, although there is a sense in which the human intellect is affected by the forms it thinks, there is no problem with the view that it has nothing in common with the forms that affect it.

Aristotle begins his reply to the second objection<sup>lxiii</sup> by saying that the intellect is an intelligible object in the way that an intelligible object is if it is without matter, since in the case of things without matter, that which thinks and what it thinks are the same.<sup>lxiv</sup> A thing without matter is a form that is not in matter, and the only form that is not in matter, according to Aristotle, is an intellect.<sup>lxv</sup> Aristotle is implicitly comparing the human intellect to the divine intellect and perhaps to the intellects in the souls of the heavenly bodies, which he implies possess life.<sup>lxvi</sup> Aristotle includes the human intellect among things not in matter even though it does not exist apart from matter by virtue of not existing apart from an embodied human soul. In the case of forms not in matter, he says, that which thinks and what it thinks are the same. Hence, when Aristotle says that "in the case of things without matter, the thinker and what is thought are the same, since contemplative knowing and what is known are the same,"<sup>lxvii</sup> he means that the intellect in activity is the same as what it is thinking, which is itself. Aristotle concludes his reply<sup>lxviii</sup> by saying that "in the case of things [forms] present in matter, each is a potential intelligible object, for they are not an intellect (since an intellect is potentially such things without their matter), but it [an intellect] will be an intelligible object." Each form present in matter is a potential intelligible form in the sense that it can be an intelligible form when it is being thought. It can be thought because the human intellect is potentially the form in matter without its matter. Nonetheless, the human intellect is an intelligible form. Why? It is because the human intellect thinks itself when it thinks a form in matter without its matter.

Aristotle does not explicitly call attention to the fact that the divine intellect, like the human intellect, is an intelligible object without matter and is the same as what it thinks, but he does imply<sup>lix</sup> that the divine intellect is such an object when, after saying that an intellect and what it thinks are the same, he says that As for the cause of why it [the human intellect] does not always think, this question should be discussed. We can see that what Aristotle implies, when he raises this question, is that the divine intellect is also an intelligible object that is without matter and thinks itself, when we ask why he raises the question. Aristotle raises the question of why the human intellect does not always think because he has just claimed that the human intellect is an intelligible object without matter, is the same as what it thinks, and thinks itself, and he believes that it is also true of the divine intellect, which always thinks, that it is an intelligible object without matter, is the same as what it thinks, and thinks itself. So the question naturally arises about why the human intellect does not, as the divine intellect does, always think. By raising the question of why the human intellect does not always think, Aristotle shows that he assumes that the objection concerns the human intellect thinking itself in the way the divine intellect does, which I have interpreted as self-awareness. Aristotle does not in *DA* III 4 answer the question of why the human intellect does not always think. The reason seems to be that a satisfactory answer would require him to explain not only in what way the human intellect and the divine intellect think themselves, but also why the human intellect thinks itself in the same way the divine intellect thinks itself. He does not even explain why the human intellect thinks itself in the same way the divine intellect does when he would be most appropriate to do so, in *DA* III 5, where he takes up the question of why the thinking of the human intellect comes to be.<sup>lxx</sup> Moreover, he does not even say, in *DA* III 5, when he could have done so, that the intellect that acts upon the human intellect, causing it to think a form it comes to be, is the divine intellect. The reason, in both cases, seems to be that he wishes to avoid a discussion of the divine intellect, which would be a long rigmarole that he does not wish to pursue in this sketch of the thinking part of the soul, since the proper place of a discussion of the divine intellect is in the science he calls both first philosophy and theology. Although Aristotle does not, in the *De Anima*, answer the question of why the human intellect does not always think by raising the question again and answering it, he does, I will suggest, imply his answer in *DA* III 5. I will explain that implication in my commentary on *DA* III 5.

In *DA* III 4, Aristotle has not explained how the human intellect thinking a form comes to be. He has only presented an account of what differentiates human intellect from the sensing part of the soul and answered two objections to the account. He has said that the human intellect is the part of the human soul that thinks the concepts it comes to be, but has not explained why it can think the concepts it comes to be. Although he has replied to the objection to his view that the human intellect thinks, he has not explained how its thinking comes to be. Although he has replied to an objection to his claim that the human intellect can think itself, he has not explained why the human intellect can think itself. In *DA* III 5, Aristotle explains, albeit incompletely and obscurely, the coming to be of the human intellect thinking a concept. He explains it by saying that there is in the human soul an intellect that acts upon another intellect and that when it does so it is like light, which makes a potential color be an actual color. He does not say, though he does imply, since it is part of his theory of an agent cause, that by acting upon the other intellect, the agent intellect imposes another instance of a form that it possesses by its own nature upon the other intellect. He assumes, but does not say, that the intellect upon which the agent intellect acts is the human intellect that comes to be a concept, that the agent intellect is the divine intellect, and that the form, another instance of which it imposes upon the human intellect, is the thinking that is self-awareness. He does not say, but presupposes, that the divine intellect imposes another instance of its form upon the human intellect only when the human intellect comes to be a concept of a form because an image containing the form is present. Nor does he say that the human intellect being aware of itself is why the human intellect thinks the concept of the form in the image. By thinking the concept of the form in the image, the human intellect thinks a form that is present in matter without its matter. This is how Aristotle explains the coming to be of thinking. In my commentary on *DA* III 5, I will explain why I believe that Aristotle leaves so much unsaid in his account of the coming to be of thinking.

### **A Translation of *DA* III 5 with a Brief Commentary**

In my translation of the first sentence of *DA* III 5 and in the translations that follow it, I include my additions in brackets to provide a context for what Aristotle says. Since in each genus of things, as in all of [the things that come to be by] nature, there is a matter that can be each of these things, and there is also something else, the cause or agent that can produce them [as things in the genus by producing a form in this matter] in the way art does [by means of producing a form] in a matter, these differences must also be present [in the genus of things that come to be] in the soul. The genus of things that come to be by nature Aristotle usually opposes to the genus of things that come to be by art, and these two genera, in turn, to the genus of things that come to be by chance.

In the genera of things that come to be by nature and by art, there is a matter, which is what comes to be an actual thing in that genus when a form is produced in it by an agent, which is the source of the form produced in the matter. The agent is the source of the form produced in the matter because it possesses by its own nature the form another instance of which it produces in the matter. The genus of things that come to be by nature or art is the genus of things that possess the form. An example of a thing that comes to be by nature is Socrates. According to Aristotle, the matter that comes to be Socrates is his mother's menses, and the agent that produces Socrates is his father, in whom the form is present, another instance of which is produced in the menses. The form the father possesses is his soul, and the form it produces in the menses is another instance of a soul, Socrates' soul, which is another instance of soul because it is the human soul as individuated by the matter supplied by his mother. Over time, Socrates' soul causes the menses to develop into Socrates' organized body by the exercise of its nutritive power. It also enables Socrates to move himself by the exercise of its power to cause this motion, and it enables Socrates to sense the world about him by the exercise of its sensing power and to think about it by the exercise of its thinking power, which it possesses because of the presence in it of the two intellects that Aristotle is about to introduce. An example of a thing that comes to be by art is a marble statue of Socrates. According to Aristotle, the matter that comes to be the marble statue of Socrates is a piece of marble that can come to be a marble statue of Socrates, and the agent that produces the marble statue is the sculptor, in whose mind is a form, an image of the external shape of Socrates, is present, another instance of which the artist produces in the piece of marble.

In my translation of this first sentence of *DA III 5*, I have added that the agent and matter to which he refers in each genus pertains to genera of things that come to be. I have explained what he believes to be the agent and matter of things that come to be by nature and by art, but I have not explained what he believes to be the genus of things that come to be in the soul. In the first half of the next sentence, Aristotle tells us that the matter in this genus is an intellect that comes to be all things in the genus and that the agent is what makes all things in the genus. Hence, the genus of things that come to be in the soul are things that an intellect comes to be. What are these things? Aristotle's failure to say explicitly what these things are enables Aquinas and many other commentators to assume that they are concepts. Since in *DA III 4* Aristotle has already indicated that the human intellect comes to be concepts, and he does not overtly explain how they come to be, Aquinas assumes that what Aristotle is explaining is the cause of the human intellect coming to be concepts. But if Aristotle assumes, as I suggest he does, that forms in images present before the human intellect cause, under the right conditions, the human intellect to come to be concepts of the forms in the images, the agent intellect is not introduced in *DA III 5* to explain why the human intellect comes to be concepts. Moreover, since in *DA III 4* Aristotle has not explained the cause of the human intellect thinking the concepts of forms it comes to be when images containing the forms are present, we should expect him to be explaining why it does so. This is the account of how thinking comes to be that Aristotle promised at the beginning of *DA III 4* he would present. What the human intellect that comes to be concepts comes to be when the agent intellect acts upon it is the thinking of the concepts it comes to be. In the first half of the next sentence, Aristotle identifies the agent and matter in the human soul he believes he needs in order to explain how thinking comes to be.

One is an intellect of a sort that comes to be all things [in the genus], while the other is an intellect of a sort that can make all things [in this genus]. . . The intellect that becomes all things in the genus, thinking, is the human intellect that has become concepts of forms in matter, and the intellect that can make all things in this genus is the agent intellect. The human intellect simultaneously comes to be concepts of forms and thinks the concepts it comes to be. It is caused to come to be concepts of forms by the forms in images present before it and it is caused to think the concepts by the agent intellect. It is caused to think a concept it comes to be by the agent intellect imposing another instance of the form it possesses by itself, the thinking I have dubbed self-awareness. It causes self-awareness, which is its own form, to be present in the human intellect when it comes to be a concept of a form in the image present before it. But if the agent intellect is the divine intellect that thinks itself, the intellect upon which it acts is the human intellect that simultaneously comes to be concepts of forms present in images, and what the agent intellect produces in the human intellect is the thinking of itself, why does Aristotle not say so? One reason, I suggest, is that he has already implied that the human intellect, like the sensing part of the soul, cannot discriminate a form unless it comes to be the form it discriminates. A second is that he has not yet discussed the role images play in thinking. The third and most important reason is that a discussion of the divine intellect and its role in the production of human thought cuts across the boundaries of two separate sciences, psychology and theology.<sup>lxxi</sup>

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle develops the science he calls both first philosophy and theology. He most likely does not believe that this science is the place in which to explain how the human intellect thinks concepts, since the science in which that explanation belongs is psychology. But in the *De Anima* he fails to talk about the divine intellect when he reaches the point at which he could talk about it. Why? The basic reason, I believe, is that were he explicitly to begin this discussion, his account of the thinking part of the soul would need to be sidetracked by an extended discussion of the relation between psychology and theology, which does not, strictly speaking, belong to the science of the soul. In any case, an extended discussion of this sort, he probably thinks, is best conducted in a separate treatise, not in the science of psychology, since it concerns both sciences. If this is right, Aristotle may have planned to write such a treatise. We have no evidence, however, that he had composed such a treatise. Although my interpretation is based upon principles that Aristotle accepts or implies that he accepts, it is at first glance counter-intuitive. It is also somewhat unpalatable to some modern scholarly tastes, since it depends upon the antiquated Aristotelian doctrine of the divine intellect. For others it is difficult to accept because it contradicts long-held interpretation of the nature of Aristotle's divine intellect or of the nature of the agent intellect. But these are not by themselves sufficient reasons for rejecting my interpretation. A better reason is that I am wrong to attribute to Aristotle the use of one or more of the principles I explain above. To convince uncommitted scholars that my interpretation is correct, I or others<sup>lxxiii</sup> will no doubt need more fully to justify the claim that Aristotle uses these principles in his account of the human intellect and to reply to objections not considered in this essay. I cannot, of course, here present and object to the many alternative interpretations, as I said above, since to do so is a book length project. I hope to have at least called into question the assumptions upon which the other interpretations are based, prompting attempts to justify them rather than simply for them to be taken for granted. Although I cannot here attempt a full justification of my interpretation, I can at least begin the process of justifying it by showing how it enables me to give a cogent explanation of the remainder of what Aristotle says in *DA III 5*.

In the second half of the sentence, in which Aristotle says that the agent intellect acts upon the human intellect to produce its thinking, Aristotle presents an analogy to the way in which the agent intellect produces its thinking. He says that the agent intellect can make all things in the human intellect . . . as a sort of fixed disposition like light [does]; for in some way light also makes potential colors be actual colors. When Aristotle says that agent intellect is like light, which makes potential colors be actual colors, he need not be implying, as Aquinas and others believe, that the agent intellect makes potential concepts be actual concepts. Aristotle nowhere says that the agent intellect does this, and I believe that I am right in my claim that what the agent intellect makes in the human intellect is potential thinking be actual thinking. I have added "[does]" to the translation to help make it clear that Aristotle may be interpreted as saying that since it makes potential thinking be actual thinking, it functions like a fixed disposition such as light, which makes potential colors be actual colors, rather than as saying that the agent intellect is a fixed disposition of the human intellect to make concepts and is like light.

Aristotle surely does not think that the agent intellect is a fixed disposition of the human intellect to make potential thinking be actual thinking, since he implies that the agent intellect is a substance that exists apart from the human intellect when he says that it acts upon the human intellect in the way that an agent acts upon matter. As an agent that acts upon matter, it is like the father who is an agent that imposes another instance of his form upon the menses of the mother; and like the father, it is a separate substance from that upon which it acts. It is also implied that it is a separate substance when Aristotle says, in the next sentence, that it is in substance an activity, which is the same as his description of the divine intellect, a separate substance.<sup>lxxiii</sup> A fixed disposition is a form that is the first actuality of a power possessed by a substance, not a separate substance.<sup>lxxiv</sup> It may be objected that the agent intellect cannot be a separate substance, since Aristotle says that it is in the human soul, which implies that it exists as a part of the human soul. But if it is a part of the human soul, it cannot be a separate substance. Moreover, there is no reason why Aristotle would say that divine intellect is in the human soul. This objection overlooks the possibility that when Aristotle says that the agent intellect is in the human soul, he need not mean that it is in the human soul as a proper part. A proper part of a whole does not, as Aristotle says the agent intellect does, exist apart from the whole in which it is present. A proper part exists in dependence upon the whole in which it exists. So the agent intellect is not a proper part of the human soul in the way the human intellect is, which perishes when the human soul in which it is present perishes. And although it is true, as this objection points out, that Aristotle does not anywhere say that the divine intellect is in the human soul, he does have a good reason to say that it is in the human soul if he believes that it acts upon the human intellect to produce its thinking.

Aristotle says that the divine intellect is, just as the human intellect is, in the human soul, since it then makes better sense of the idea that it can act upon the human intellect. Were they not both present in the human soul when the one acts upon the other, he most likely believes, the divine intellect could not, so to speak, make the “contact” with the human intellect that is necessary for there to be a causal relation between them.<sup>lxxv</sup> Analogously, the father could not act upon the menses of the mother, creating a new life, unless the father, through his sperm, makes contact with the menses. It may also be objected that potential thinking is not present in the human soul in the way a potential color is present in its medium, since a potential color can be in its medium even when it is not yet made actually visible by light, but potential thinking is not present in the human soul when it is not yet made actual thinking by the agent intellect. A potential concept is present in the human soul, once acquired, just as a potential color is present in its medium. So Aristotle surely is making an analogy to the agent intellect making a potential concept an actual concept. This objection fails, since the point of Aristotle’s analogy is to call attention to the role of an agent making something potential be actual, not to indicate that the things that are potential in the two cases are alike in some respect other than that of an agent making something potential be something actual.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Finally, it might be objected that if the agent intellect is a separate substance, it would be like fire or a heavenly body that illuminates colors in a medium rather than like light, which is present in the medium. In this case, the objection is based on extending the analogy Aristotle is drawing between light and the agent intellect beyond the intent with which the analogy is being drawn. Aristotle is not suggesting that light and the agent intellect are alike in every respect. They are alike only in respect to the effect they produce upon that upon which they act. The analogy is not meant to extend beyond the circumstance that the air or water in which a potential color is present is made to be an actual visible color by light. In the same way, a potential thinking in the human intellect is made to be an actual thinking by the agent intellect. That the agent intellect can exist apart from the human soul is irrelevant to the point of the analogy. It is sufficient that it exists, albeit not as a proper part, in the human soul when it acts.

But I still need to explain what Aristotle means when he says that light makes potential colors be actual colors and what the analogy shows about how the agent intellect making potential thinking be actual thinking. The explanation is straightforward. In *DA* II 7, where Aristotle explains what light is and how it is related to color, he does not say that light makes potential colors be actual colors. What he says is that if a color is to be visible,<sup>lxxvii</sup> a medium (such as air or water)<sup>lxxviii</sup> in which a potentially visible color must exist if it is to affect the eyes, must be caused to be transparent by the presence in it of light cast by fire or a heavenly body. In this case, a potential color is a color not visible because the medium has not been made transparent, an actual color is a color made visible because the medium has been made to be transparent, and the cause of the medium being transparent is light, which makes a potential color be an actual color.<sup>lxxix</sup> If we use this information to interpret the analogy to the agent intellect making thinking, then potential thinking is the thinking of the human intellect not being actual because the human intellect has not been made aware of itself when it comes to be a concept, actual thinking is potential thinking made actual because the human intellect has been made aware of itself when it comes to be a concept, and of course the cause of the human intellect being aware of itself when it comes to be a concept is the agent intellect.<sup>lxxx</sup>

It might be objected that I have not correctly explained Aristotle’s analogy between how light and the agent intellect make potential things be actual things, since the medium upon which light acts is not what can see colors, but the human intellect upon which the agent intellect acts is what can think forms. This objection overlooks the point of the comparison Aristotle is making, which is that the agent intellect is like light in its role of making what is potential be actual. The comparison does not fail because the medium in which a potential color is made an actual color cannot see the color. The disanalogy upon which the objection is based is to be explained simply by the fact that what the agent intellect causes in the medium is the direct awareness of itself rather than transparency. The comparison Aristotle uses is meant only to explain how the agent intellect causes potential thinking be actual thinking, not to explain what it is that can think. Another objection that might be raised is that light is present in the medium in which a potential color is present, but if the agent intellect is, as I claim it is, a substance that exists apart from the human soul in which potential thinking is present, it is not present in the medium in which potential thinking is present. Therefore, it might be concluded, the agent intellect cannot be a separate substance. This objection overlooks the fact that Aristotle explicitly says that the agent intellect is present in the human soul.

If the medium in which a potential thinking is present is the human soul and the agent intellect is present in it, even though not as a proper part, Aristotle can assume, from this point of view, that the agent intellect is present in the medium in which potential thinking is present, just as light is present in the medium in which a potential color is present. After Aristotle says that the agent intellect makes potential thinking be actual thinking in the way that a fixed disposition like light makes potential colors be actual colors, he discusses the agent intellect. The latter intellect is separate, unaffected, and unmixed, and in substance it is an activity. Since Aristotle has in *DA* III 4 attributed to the human intellect the characteristics of being separate from, unaffected by, and unmixed with the body,<sup>lxxxix</sup> and only the agent intellect is in substance an activity, Aristotle seems to be calling attention to similarities and differences between the two intellects. This may be the correct interpretation, but there is another possible interpretation to which I wish to call attention. According to this interpretation, the first three of these characteristics, as they apply to the agent intellect, are not the same as those Aristotle attributes to the human intellect if he believes, as I claim he does, that the agent intellect is the divine intellect. If this is correct, Aristotle means to be mentioning only characteristics that are distinctive of the agent intellect. So what Aristotle may be implying is that the agent intellect, unlike the human intellect, is separate not only from the body in the way the human intellect is, but also separate in existence from the human soul in which it is present, since it continues to exist after the human soul ceases to exist.<sup>lxxxii</sup> Moreover, since it is separate in existence from the human intellect, the agent intellect is not affected in the ways in which the human intellect is affected when it comes to be a concept, when it changes from not thinking a concept to thinking the concept, and when it changes from thinking a concept to not thinking the concept. Since change is an effect produced in the matter of sensible things by an agent acting upon it, and both the human intellect and the agent intellect are not present in matter, neither is affected in the sense that it is changed in the way the matter of sensible things is changed.

But the agent intellect does not even change in the sense that an agent changes when it begins to act on the matter of sensible things and ceases to act upon this matter. For Aristotle seems to believe that only agents present in the matter of sensible things change in this way when they act and cease to act upon this matter, and the agent intellect present in the human soul is not present in such matter.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> If the agent intellect is the divine intellect, it is unmixed not only with a body, as the human intellect is, but also unmixed with the human soul in which it is present, for in spite of being present in the human soul, it is not a proper part of the human soul in the way the human intellect is. Finally, regardless of how the first three characteristics are interpreted, it is clear that Aristotle is pointing to a difference the agent intellect has to the human intellect when he says that the agent intellect is in substance an activity in the sense that its essence is an activity. Aristotle saying that the agent intellect is in substance an activity is a clear indication not only that he believes that it is a separate substance,<sup>lxxxiv</sup> but also that he believes that it is the divine intellect, whose substance, Aristotle also says, is an activity.<sup>lxxxv</sup> The essence of the human intellect, by contrast, is its potentiality to think a concept it comes to be because the agent intellect causes it to be aware of itself when it comes to be the concept. In the next sentence, Aristotle seems to be explaining why<sup>lxxxvi</sup> the agent intellect possesses the four characteristics he has just said it possesses. For what acts is always revered more than that which is acted upon, and the source [of the form possessed by matter] than the matter [that receives a form from this source].

What Aristotle means to be saying is not clear to me, since an agent always being revered more than the matter upon which it acts cannot be why the agent intellect is separate, unaffected, unmixed and in substance an activity. A line may have been dropped from an early text of which the texts we have are descendents and in that text he had said that the intellect, that is separate, unaffected, unmixed and in substance an activity, is more revered than the human intellect,<sup>lxxxvii</sup> and here he explains why. Another possibility is that the Greek word I have translated as "revered more" was mistakenly substituted for another word that occurred in an earlier lost text. The most likely possibility, however, is that he is merely explaining a sign of the fact that the agent intellect possesses these characteristics. Why Aristotle bothers to say that the agent intellect is always revered more than the human intellect is also not clear to me. My best guess is that he assumes that the agent intellect is the divine intellect and he himself has more reverence for the divine intellect as an agent than for the human intellect as its patient.

His reverence of the divine intellect is evident from the account of it in *M XII* 6–10, where he says (i) that its eternal activity is like the best thinking activity of which we can have but for a little while,<sup>lxxxviii</sup> (ii) that it is because of its activity that “being awake, sensing and thinking are most pleasant,<sup>lxxxix</sup> (iii) that it thinks itself, as our intellects do when they are the same as their intelligible objects,<sup>xc</sup> (iv) that its activity, which is that of God, is a life that is the best and eternal,<sup>xc</sup> (v) that even though its thinking of itself, unlike the incidental thinking of itself in which the human intellect engages, is not incidental to it, in both the intellect is the same as what it thinks,<sup>xcii</sup> and (vi) that the primary instance of goodness is that of the divine intellect and the goodness in the order of the sensible world is a secondary instance.<sup>xciii</sup>

What Aristotle says in (i), (ii), (iii) and (v) also lends support to my claim that the agent intellect is the divine intellect. In the next two sentences of *DA III* 5, as in the prior two, Aristotle does not fully express the meaning of what he writes, and his reason for saying what he does with these sentences is again unclear until we see that his use of the sentences presupposes that the thinking of the human intellect is actually what the thinking of the agent intellect is potentially. In my translation, I have inserted in brackets what is needed in order to help the reader to understand what I believe to be the fuller meaning of what he writes. Actual knowledge [of a thing] is the same as the thing [it knows]. But potential knowledge [of a thing] is prior in time [to actual knowledge] in the one [the human intellect]. It is not, in general, prior in time [to actual knowledge, unless the agent that produces actual knowledge in the human intellect sometimes thinks and sometimes does not]. But it does not sometimes think and sometimes not. Actual knowledge is an intellect actually knowing a thing it knows by virtue of thinking it, and potential knowledge is an intellect possessing knowledge not being used. When Aristotle says that actual knowledge is the same as the thing it knows, he means that when an intellect possesses actual knowledge, what it knows is the same as itself. In the case of the agent intellect, it is clear that what the intellect knows is the same as itself, since it does not know anything else. In the case of the human intellect, what the intellect knows is also the same as itself, since it knows itself when it knows a thought it comes to be.<sup>xciv</sup> So Aristotle is at first calling attention to a similarity between the agent intellect and the human intellect. In what follows, I will suggest, he will imply that the divine intellect actually knowing itself is the cause of the human intellect actually knowing itself.

When Aristotle then says that the potential knowledge of the human intellect is prior in time to its actual knowledge, he is alluding to a difference between the human intellect and the agent intellect, since the agent intellect does not possess potential knowledge and the human intellect does. When Aristotle says that potential knowledge is not, in general, prior in time to actual knowledge, he implies that potential knowledge is not always prior in time, since the agent intellect is without potential knowledge and it is the cause of the actual knowledge of the human intellect. That the agent intellect, unlike the human intellect, is without potential knowledge is shown by the fact that it does not, as the human intellect does, sometimes think and sometimes not think. So here he points to a difference between the agent intellect and the human intellect, though he does not explain why he calls attention to the difference. Why does Aristotle call attention to the difference? The reason he calls attention to the difference can be gathered from what he says in *DA III* 7, where he repeats the first three sentences of the passage I just translated, but replaces its fourth sentence, that “it [the agent intellect] does not sometimes think and sometimes not,” with the sentence that “for all things that come to be [are things that] come to be from things that actually are.”<sup>xcv</sup> In *DA III* 7, Aristotle replaces the fourth sentence with this one because he uses the example of how actual knowledge is related to potential knowledge to illustrate the principle that “all things that come to be [are things that] come to be from things that actually are,” which he applies, in the next sentence of *DA III* 7, to the coming to be of forms in the sensing part of the soul. He says that what the sensing part of the soul is, potentially, is caused actually to be by a sensible form that is actually what the sensing part of the soul comes to be. The idea is that a form that comes to be in the sensing part of the soul comes to be from a form that actually is.

Although in the last sentence of the passage just translated from *DA III* 5, Aristotle does not state the principle that all things that come to be are things that come to be from things that actually are,<sup>xcvi</sup> he is assuming its applicability and implying that although potential knowledge in the human intellect is prior in time to its actual knowledge, actual knowledge is not, in general, prior in time to potential knowledge, since what the knowledge of the human intellect is, potentially, is caused actually to be by the actual knowledge of the agent intellect, which does not sometimes think and sometimes does not think.

The actual knowledge of the agent intellect is the thinking of itself, and the potentiality of the human intellect to possess this actual knowledge, the thinking of itself, is caused to come to be by the actual knowledge of the agent intellect, which is the thinking of itself. That the agent intellect produces the actual knowledge of the human intellect is what I have included in the bracketed part of my translation above in order to explain why it is said that the agent intellect does not sometimes think and sometimes not think. Hence, in this passage, Aristotle is justifying, albeit somewhat obscurely, his prior claim that the agent intellect causes the potential thinking of the human intellect to come to be actual thinking by causing it be thinking itself. The agent intellect's actual knowledge/thinking of itself is the cause of the human intellect's actual knowledge/thinking of itself. The fact that my interpretation establishes the relevance (as well as the placement) of these sentences in *DA* III 5, is a powerful confirmation of the whole of my interpretation of *DA* III 5.

Moreover, Aristotle also implies, when he says that both actual knowledge and potential knowledge exists in the human intellect and that its potential knowledge is made actual by the actual knowledge of the agent intellect, that the question Aristotle raised in *DA* III 4, about why the human intellect does not always think, has been answered, although without an explicit statement of it being the answer to the question. In first part of the next sentence, Aristotle explains an important difference between the agent intellect and the human intellect. This difference is explained in terms of what happens when the agent intellect is separated from the human soul at the time of death: at that time the agent intellect is still the very thing it is by itself, and by implication, the human intellect is not still the very thing it is by itself, a power to come to be a concept of a form when an image containing the form is present and to think the concept when caused to do so by the agent intellect, since it ceases to exist. The difference is that the agent intellect alone is immortal and eternal. It [the agent intellect] is the very thing it is by itself when it is separated [from our souls], and this alone is immortal and eternal . . . What the agent intellect is by itself is an intellect that thinks itself. It remains the very thing it is by itself when it is separated from our souls. It is immortal and eternal, while our human intellects, at the time of our death, cease to exist. The comment that this intellect alone is immortal and eternal seems to be made to point out a difference between the agent intellect and our human intellects. The fact that our human intellects, like the divine intellect, think themselves when they have actual knowledge, does not imply that they are, as the divine intellect is, immortal and eternal. When we die, our human intellects can no longer think themselves, since they cease to exist when our souls ceases to exist, but the divine intellect in our souls continues to think itself, since it is immortal and eternal. Aristotle is also implying that the divine intellect's action of causing thinking in our human intellects is not part of its nature. It is not part of the nature of the divine intellect to cause our intellects to think any more than it is a part of its nature to be the end for the sake of which living things engage in their most characteristic activities.<sup>xcvii</sup> Its nature is to think itself.

The last part of the sentence, the first part of which is translated above, eliminates a misunderstanding that may arise from the statement that the agent intellect alone is immortal and eternal. The bracketed portions in the translation are my educated guesses concerning what is meant. . . but we do not [after death] remember [what we have thought during our lives], since this [immortal and eternal intellect] is unaffected [when we think], while the intellect that is affected perishes, and without this [affected intellect], [after death] there is nothing that thinks [what we have thought during our lives]. What is said in this part of this sentence, which is the last sentence of *DA* III 5, may reasonably be interpreted in a number of different ways. The interpretation I favor is that Aristotle notices that his claim, that only the agent intellect is immortal and eternal, might lead us to suppose that after death we can remember what we have thought during our lives, since he said that the agent intellect is in our souls and he has not explicitly said that the agent intellect is the divine intellect or that it thinks only itself. Although he has said that the agent intellect does not sometimes think and sometimes not think, he has not explained that it does not sometimes think and sometimes not think because by its own nature it thinks only itself. So it might be thought that Aristotle has committed himself to the view that we can remember what we have thought in this life after death, since this part of our souls is immortal and eternal.

Aristotle is pointing out that even though the part of the human soul that must be present if the human intellect is to think the concepts it comes to be is immortal and eternal, we do not after death remember what we have thought during our lives. We do not remember what we have thought during our lives, he says, because the intellect that is immortal and eternal is unaffected when we think, while the intellect that is affected perishes at the time of death, and without the intellect that perishes, after death there is nothing that can think what we have thought during our lives.

In making the point that we do not after death remember what we have thought during our lives, Aristotle explicitly cites a difference between the agent intellect and the human intellect previously only implicit: the agent intellect is unaffected by what the human intellect thinks, while the human intellect is affected.<sup>xcviii</sup> What Aristotle says in this last sentence of *DA III 5*, he has already said, in *DA I 4*,<sup>xcix</sup> but in a provisional way. He says there that the intellect, which in *DA III 5*, he identifies as the intellect that acts upon the human intellect, “seems to come to be in us as a sort of substance and to be indestructible.” First he claims that even though, when we are old or drunk or sick, our thinking loses its strength, it is not because this intellect is affected, but because what possesses the intellect is affected. Then he claims that when what possesses this intellect has perished, there is nothing that remembers or loves, since memory and love belonged to what possessed the intellect and “has perished, while the intellect is perhaps something more divine and cannot be affected” when we are old or drunk or sick.<sup>c</sup>

Although Aristotle does not, as far as I know, anywhere in his treatises, identify us with the agent intellect, he comes closest when he says, in *NE X 7*,<sup>ci</sup> that we should not pay attention to those who would have us, since mortal beings, think of mortal things, since we should “make ourselves immortal so far as we can.”<sup>cii</sup> He says that if the intellect is divine, then life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. Far from being an endorsement of the view that we are the agent intellect in ourselves, what Aristotle says implies that we are not the agent intellect, since he says that we are mortal beings, and in *DA III 5* he clearly distinguishes us from the agent intellect. Life according to the divine intellect in our souls is simply a life of contemplation. When Aristotle says that we should “make ourselves immortal so far as we can,” I doubt that he means anything more than that when we think, our intellects come to be like the agent intellect insofar as they partake, so to speak, in the divine thought by virtue of thinking themselves when we think. He is not implying that the human intellect might be able somehow to merge with the divine intellect, since he never alludes to this sort of yogic accomplishment, which in India was a commonplace. On the other hand, his teacher, Plato, may have thought this sort of thing possible, since he belonged to the tradition of Greek thought that sought the union of our intellects with the divine. But even if Aristotle, who rejects this part of Plato’s philosophy, retains the language of becoming like the divine, he surely changes its meaning. For it is clear that he rejects the part of Plato’s philosophy that includes the pre-existence of the human soul in the divine world, the fall of this soul from that world, the human soul regaining its place in the divine world, and the omniscience of the divine intellect.

Although in *DA III 4–5* Aristotle argues that the divine intellect is present in our souls and causes their human part to think the forms it comes to be, he does so in a way that avoids the Platonic views that the forms the human intellect comes to be exist apart from matter as ideas in the divine intellect, that it became these forms prior to our birth, and that our sense-perception of the moving images of the forms created by the divine intellect occasions the recollection of these forms. He avoids these views, in spite of agreeing with Plato that what the human intellect thinks are forms, that the forms, as thought, are without matter, that there is a divine intellect, and that the divine intellect is present in our souls and causes our intellects to think the forms. The difference that makes the difference here is that Aristotle has developed different accounts of what the divine intellect is and how it acts upon the human intellect that accord with his belief that the forms the human intellect comes to be are forms that exist in the matter of sensible substances.<sup>ciii</sup> These different accounts enable him to replace Plato’s rationalist theory, that the concepts employed by the human intellect to think about the sensible world are recollections of separately existing forms present in the divine intellect, with the empiricist theory that they are concepts of forms present in matter.

Aristotle does this while avoiding the implicit radical empiricist theory of Protagoras, which Plato seems to have believed is based on Heraclitus’ denial of the existence of forms present in matter and led Protagoras to infer that concepts both arise from and represent our ever-changing sensings of matter in motion.<sup>civ</sup> Finally, unlike Plato’s divine intellect, which is an agent that looks to the good, and imposes, because it is good, order upon the unruly motions in the receptacle of becoming by employing its ideas as exemplars for the order imposed,<sup>cv</sup> Aristotle’s divine intellect is both the good for the sake of which living things engage in their most characteristic activities<sup>cvi</sup> and the agent present in our souls that imposes its own form upon the human intellect so that we can, whenever we wish, think forms present in matter by thinking the concepts of forms we have acquired by means of sense-perception.<sup>cvii</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> In this essay, I use “C” to refer to Categories, “DA” to refer to De Anima, “DI” to refer to De Interpretatione, “DM” to refer to De Memoria, “EE” to refer to Eudemian Ethics, “GA” to refer to Generation of Animals, “M” to refer to Metaphysics, “NE” to refer to Nicomachean Ethics, “P” to refer to Physics, “PA” to refer to Parts of Animals, and “PostA” to refer to Posterior Analytics. The edition of the Greek text of the De Anima I use for my translation and interpretation is W.D. Ross’ Aristotle De Anima (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

<sup>ii</sup> For instance, Aristotle follows the practice of often omitting, from a sentence, a word or phrase that occurs in a previous sentence when he assumes that its use is understood. I believe, as most other commentators do, that works in which such practices are common are concise statements of what he discusses in his talks to students. The compression in DA III 5 is extreme, which suggests that it contains mere notes rather than an abbreviated statement of claims.

<sup>iii</sup> I am addressing this essay to non-specialists who may not have knowledge of Greek. For this reason, I do not pepper my text and notes with citations of Aristotle’s Greek. What I have to say about Aristotle’s account of the human intellect in DA III 4–5 should be of interest to all who seek an understanding of his philosophy as a whole, and I prefer not to alienate readers without knowledge of Greek. However, in the few cases where the points I make require a reference to Aristotle’s Greek terms, I will transliterate them.

<sup>iv</sup> DA III 4 (429a10–3).

<sup>v</sup> An indication that Aristotle here says that in DA III 5 he is explaining how thinking comes to be is that, at the beginning of DA III 5, he does not announce a new topic, and begins DA III 5 with *epei d’*, which shows that it is a continuation of DA III 4.

<sup>vi</sup> Aristotle includes in thinking the use of a concept to apprehend an intelligible object and the combining concepts to say something about a subject. In DA 4–5 Aristotle is concerned only with how the human intellect uses a concept to apprehend an intelligible object.

<sup>vii</sup> At DA III 4 (429b10-19) distinguishes flesh from its essence and raises the question of whether flesh and its essence are discriminated by different faculties or by the same faculty differently disposed to each because the intellect can conceive both flesh and its essence.

<sup>viii</sup> At DA III 4 (429a15–18) Aristotle says that the thinking part of the soul “should be capable of receiving a form and be potentially such as that [form]” rather than be potentially the form itself, where being such as the form is being a likeness of it.

<sup>ix</sup> See DI 16a5.

<sup>x</sup> The term, *noēma*, in its generic meaning is a thought, whose specific meanings are a concept and a combination of concepts. See DI 16a10, DI 16a15 and DA 430a29. A concept is a thought that is without falsity and a combination of concepts is a thought that is true or false. In DA III 4–5 Aristotle discusses only how the human intellect forms and uses a concept. In DA III 6 he discusses how the human intellect combines concepts.

<sup>xi</sup> DA III 4 (429a21–2).

<sup>xii</sup> In DA III 4 (429b10ff) Aristotle distinguishes flesh from the essence of flesh and raises the question of whether they are conceived by different faculties or by the same faculty differently disposed to each. Flesh is an example of an intelligible object that is not an intelligible form and the essence of flesh is an example of its intelligible form. An intelligible form is a universal the human intellect by nature predicates of many things that are composites of form and matter, and the form of an intelligible object is its essence. The essence of an intelligible object causes, by its presence in many things, the human intellect to predicate the intelligible object or universal of the many things. In M VII 10 Aristotle discusses the difference between how the unity of intelligible objects and their essences are reflected in their definitions.

<sup>xiii</sup> At DA III 9 (432a15–6), Aristotle classifies thinking and sensing as the two ways in which a soul discriminates forms. What I call, on his behalf, simple thinking, Aristotle believes to be contact of the human intellect with an intelligible form in the world. See M IX 10 (1051b24). In DA III 6 (430a29), Aristotle contrasts simple thought with complex thought, which is thought in which concepts already formed are combined. The object of complex thought is divisible in the sense that, in it, at least one thing is said of another.

<sup>xiv</sup> At the beginning of DA III 6 (430a26–7), Aristotle calls this the thinking of an indivisible thing (i.e. an intelligible form) and says that it is without falsity.

<sup>xv</sup> I base this idea on his view that in the definition of an intelligible form one thing is not said of another. See, for instance, M VII 4 (1030a11). If the form of a human being is being a rational animal, the form is indivisible because being rational is not said of an animal and being an animal is not said of that which is rational. By contrast, being a tall human being is not an indivisible form, since tall is said of a human being.

<sup>xvi</sup> See DA III 6 (430a27–8).

<sup>xvii</sup> Aristotle makes the distinction at DA III 4 (430a2–9). He refers to a form that is not present in matter at DA III 4 (430a3) as an intelligible object without matter. This intelligible object, he implies, as I will explain below, is an intellect that thinks itself, as opposed to an intelligible object that is thought by something else. As such, it seems to be neither a potential intelligible object nor an actual intelligible object of the sort a form present in matter is. The divine intellect is surely the primary instance of a form not present in matter, the human intellect that comes to be a concept, I suggest here, a secondary instance of such a form, and the substantial and incidental forms of particular sensible substances are examples of forms present in matter.

<sup>xviii</sup> See DA III 4 (430a5–6). A potential intelligible object seems to be a potential universal that becomes an actual universal when it is thought by the human intellect. In PostA II 19, where Aristotle says that a universal in things makes a stand in the human soul in dependence upon sense-perception, the meaning seems to be that present in particular things is a potential universal that comes to be an actual universal when it is thought by the human soul. One way in which Aristotle opposes Plato's theory of forms is to deny that actual universals exist outside the human intellect. This way of opposing Plato's theory is based on the assumption that Plato's forms are actual universals present in particular things.

<sup>xix</sup> Aristotle posits the existence of celestial intellects in M XII. Like the divine intellect, they are always thinking.

<sup>xx</sup> Aristotle believes that the divine intellect, which is a form without matter, thinks only itself; he implies, in M XII 8 that celestial intellects, which are forms without matter, think only the divine intellect and in imitation of what they think they cause their celestial bodies to engage in perfect circular motion; so he believes that only the human intellect thinks forms present in matter without their matter.

<sup>xxi</sup> Aristotle no doubt also believes that the human intellect can think a form that is not present in matter, but he does not discuss this sort of case in DA III 4–8. So I will not discuss how he reconciles this belief with his empiricism.

<sup>xxii</sup> See M IX 10 (1052a1, 1051b25, 1051b31–3, and 1052a1). But in M V 4 (1027b28–9) Aristotle says of this thinking that there is neither truth nor falsity.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See DA III 7 (431b1).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Since a concept in the human soul is a form present in matter without its matter, and the human intellect thinks the form in the image by thinking the form without its matter, the human intellect thinks a form in an image by thinking the concept of the form in the image.

<sup>xxv</sup> See DA III 7 (431a16–7).

<sup>xxvi</sup> See DA III 8 (432a4–14). Aristotle also says that the first concepts are different from images.

<sup>xxvii</sup> There are many questions we might raise concerning what Aristotle might say about the number of images associated with any one concept, about the exact circumstances under which one or more images gives rise to a concept, about how, since any given image contains numerous forms, a concept of one of these forms arises rather than of any of the others, about how different images, either at different times on one person's life, or present in different souls, give rise to the same concepts, and other such questions. I will ignore all such questions because the answers do not seem to be pertinent to the answers Aristotle might give to the questions we have about what he says in DA III 5.

<sup>xxviii</sup> The human intellect comes to possess concepts in the way in which matter comes to possess forms rather than in the way a composite of form and matter comes to possess forms. Before the human intellect comes to possess concepts, according to Aristotle, it is the mere potentiality of the human soul to think concepts, which it cannot think without coming to possess the concepts it thinks.

<sup>xxix</sup> That a thought represents the way in which forms in matter are combined does not mean that in matter they are, as present in matter, distinct from one another, since some forms are inseparably combined in matter, and others are not. Aristotle also speaks of concepts being separated from one another when thoughts express one thing not being combined with another.

<sup>xxx</sup> That the human intellect is the same as what it thinks is what Aristotle means at DA III 4 (430a4) and DA III 7 (431b18).

<sup>xxxi</sup> See DA III 4 (429a24).

<sup>xxxii</sup> We may assume that after the human intellect comes to be a concept of a form by thinking it, it remains the same concept that is later used later to think, even if knowledge of the definition of the concept is acquired.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> A causal condition for a sensible form to produce a sense-impression, for instance, is the working condition of the relevant sense-organ, and this is not, of course, a causal condition for an intelligible form in an image to produce a concept of the form.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> See PostA II 19 (99b32–100b7). Aristotle says that we have an innate discriminating power called the sensing part of the soul, which when activated gives rise to sense-impressions, from which when retained [as images] memories arise, from which experiences arise. In experiences, he seems to say, universals are stabilized in the soul. He says that the first universal makes a stand in the soul when we sense an individual, since the sensing "is of the universal." Then other universals make a stand, and this process continues on until a generic universal makes a stand. Aristotle concludes that "we must come to know the primary things [universals] by induction, since it is in this way that sensing also produces in us the universal." In things, universals are forms in matter, and in the human soul, we may assume, universals are concepts of forms in matter. Aristotle does not discuss the role of discourse and other causal factors that come into play when concepts are being learned.

<sup>xxxv</sup> See DA III 3 (427b17–21).

<sup>xxxvi</sup> To make it clear that the word here is *eidōla*, often translated as "image," rather than *phantasmata*, and that the sort of images to which he refers are sensible images, I have added "sensible" to "images." Above I refer to the images that are the content of the act of the imagination simply as "images."

<sup>xxxvii</sup> That it is an image that is brought before the human intellect is confirmed by what Aristotle says at DM (449b31–450a23), where the analogy is to drawing a diagram.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> At DA II 5 (417b22–5), Aristotle says that we can think whenever we wish because things, universally taken, are in a way present in the human soul. In other words, we can think whenever we wish because the concepts being thought are already possessed.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Aristotle says nothing explicitly about how the human intellect comes to be a concept. Since in DI 1 (16a3–16) Aristotle says that words are primarily signs of affections of the soul (i.e. concepts), which are likenesses of the things to which the words refer, he probably believes that the human intellect comes to be concepts in the context of words being learned. The things he says in PostA II 19, M I 1 and P I 1 do not seem to me to be very helpful. The fact that Aristotle did not attempt to explain how exactly the human intellect comes to be a concept of a form present in an image is what enables Aquinas and others to believe that in DA III 5 Aristotle posits an active power of the mind that causes concepts of forms to be present in the passive intellect.

<sup>xl</sup> See DA II 4 (415a24–415b7).

<sup>xli</sup> Compare GA II 1 (731b18–732a12). Also see NE VII 13 (1153b32) that all things by nature have something divine in them. In EE VII 14 (1248a26–7) he says that God is the beginning of motion in the soul, as it is in the universe.

<sup>xlii</sup> See M XII 9 (1074b35–6).

<sup>xliii</sup> There is, of course, also the thinking that involves the combining of concepts to form thoughts that are true or false. I will ignore here this sense in which the human intellect thinks as a form of thinking that exists in dependence upon thinking a form present in matter without the matter in which it is present.

<sup>xliv</sup> Aristotle explains the idea of related senses of a term is at M IV 2 (1003a33–b11), where he explains the related senses of “being.” For another use I think he makes of related senses of a term, see my “Predication and Inherence in Aristotle’s Categories,” in *Phronesis* 15, 1970, 179–202.

<sup>xlv</sup> See M IV 2 (1003a16–8), where, after Aristotle has introduced his view of other senses of a term being derived from its basic sense, he says that every science (which would include psychology, a part of physics) “is concerned mainly with what is first, both as that upon which the others depend, and as that through which the others are named.” Also see M XII 7 (1072b1), where he says that “that which is first is always the best or by analogy so” among opposites. Conceptual thinking as other-awareness and self-awareness, perhaps Aristotle construe as opposites, and if so, since the thinking of the divine intellect is first, and so the best, the thinking of the human intellect would depend upon that of the divine intellect. Compare M II 1 (24–32).

<sup>xlvi</sup> At the beginning of DA III 9 (432a15–6) Aristotle divides the power of the soul to discriminate objects into the power to think them and the power to sense them.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Although I believe Aristotle alludes to the divine intellect at DA III 6 (430b24–6 and 33) and at DA III 7 (441b17–9), I will not defend this belief here, since I am concerned only with DA III 4–5.

<sup>xlviii</sup> This is how, in DA II 5, Aristotle explains an affection of the complex of form and matter. He says at 417a16 that the human intellect is changed to a fixed disposition [to think a form] and a nature. Because he has already explained this, he does not elaborate the point again in DA III 4.

<sup>xlix</sup> See DA III 4 (429a13–8). Aristotle, I believe, thinks that just as the sensing part of the soul senses a sensible form that is present in matter by means of a sense-impression of the form within itself, so the thinking part of the human soul thinks an intelligible form that is present in matter by means of a concept of the form within itself. The sense-impression, however, exists both in a sense-organ and in the sensing part of the soul because a part of the sensing part of the soul exists in a sense-organ.

Some commentators believe that for Aristotle sensing is just a physiological change in a sense-organ and others that for him sensing is just a change in the soul, but he clearly believes that it is both. Although Aristotle is not so clear about this, this interpretation reconciles the different things he does say. At DA II 5 (417b20–7), he implies that sense-impressions, like concepts, are in the soul, yet treats them in most of DA II 7–12, as if they are just changes in the sense-organs. He implies that sensing is a discrimination of sensible forms by means of a discrimination of sense-impressions in sense organs when (i) at DA II 12 (424b16–8) he says that smelling, unlike the alteration of the medium undergoes when odors come to be present in it, is a sensing of the odor, and (ii) when he says elsewhere that sensing is an activity of the soul. Compare also P VII 3 (248a6–7), where Aristotle says that alteration occurs not only in sensible things, but also in the sensing part of the soul, which can be interpreted to mean that the alteration is a sense-impression that occurs not only in a sense-organ, but also in the soul.

<sup>l</sup> See DA II 12 (424a18–22).

<sup>li</sup> Compare DA III 2 (427a3–14), where Aristotle discusses the indivisibility of sensing.

<sup>lii</sup> See DA III 4 (429a18–b29).

<sup>liii</sup> Aristotle does not explain what he means by a highly intelligible object. What I am saying is the first way in which Aristotle explains the difference between the thinking part of the soul and the sensing part of the soul.

<sup>liv</sup> See DA III 3 (426a28–b4) and DA III 4 (429a29–b5). Compare DA III 2 (426a28–b4). It is possible that what Aristotle means by an intelligible object that is highly intelligible is a form that exists apart from matter, as opposed to a form that exists in matter. Such is the divine intellect. If this is right, he is saying here that the thinking of a form that exists without matter better enables us to think forms that are present in matter. How exactly it would do this is not clear. Although this may be an allusion to the divine intellect, I am not sure that he does not simply mean, for instance, that knowledge of the axioms of a science better enables us to know the theses of the science.

<sup>lv</sup> It is at DA III 4 (429b7) that Aristotle first explicitly says that the human intellect comes to be each of the forms it thinks. He says this in the context of saying that the human intellect acquires concepts rather than in the context of saying that it thinks them. He discussed this in DA II 5.

<sup>lvi</sup> See DA III 4 (429b5–9). Compare DA II 5 (417a22–b27). Although Aristotle does not explicitly say that he is here distinguishing the thinking part of the soul from the sensing part, we may infer that this is what he is doing, since he has said that in this chapter he is distinguishing these different parts of the soul.

<sup>lvii</sup> The sense-impression, however, is retained as an image of the object sensed, but this is different.

<sup>lviii</sup> See DA III 4 (429b10–22) where Aristotle says that the thinking power of the soul may be separate from its sensing power or be related to it as a straightened line is related to a bent line. Commentators give different interpretations of this comment. Aristotle says that the power of the human intellect to discriminate the essence of abstracted geometrical form is different from the power to discriminate the geometrical form or is the same power differently disposed to each. He generalizes his points by saying, in an obscure fashion, that the human intellect discriminates what is present in matter without its matter.

<sup>lix</sup> See DA III 4 (429b22–430a9).

<sup>lx</sup> The objection includes the claim that Aristotle has said that the human intellect is simple, which is a reference to his claim that its nature is to be a potentiality.

<sup>lxi</sup> See DA III 4 (426b27–9).

<sup>lxii</sup> As ancient and modern commentators have pointed out, what Aristotle says does not express the point he wants to make. So I state in the next sentence the point he does mean to be making.

<sup>lxiii</sup> See DA III 4 (430a2–3).

<sup>lxiv</sup> An intellect, as a thing without matter, is a form not present in matter. The human intellect, unlike the divine intellect, is not an intelligible object by its own nature, since it is caused to be an intelligible object by a form present in an image when it acquires a concept. A sign that the human intellect is not an intelligible object by its own nature is that it does not, as the divine intellect does, always think itself.

<sup>lxv</sup> What Aristotle here calls a thing without matter many commentators interpret as a concept.

<sup>lxvi</sup> See M XII 8, in which he discusses immovable substances that are responsible for circular motions in the heavens other than those caused by the circular motions of the first heaven. Compare DA II 3 (414b18–9).

<sup>lxvii</sup> See DA III 4 (430a3–5).

<sup>lxviii</sup> See DA III 4 (430a6–9).

<sup>lix</sup> See DA III 4 (430a5–6).

<sup>lxx</sup> Since the human intellect does not always think, but the divine intellect always thinks, a complete definition of the human intellect, which distinguishes it not only from the sensing part of the soul, but also from the divine intellect, would include an explanation of why it is not always thinking.

<sup>lxxi</sup> Notice that the divine intellect being a cause of both the motions of the first heaven and human thought does not cut across the boundaries of two separate sciences in the way a common axiom does, since it does not, as an axiom does, belong to all beings qua being. See M IV 3 (1005a24).

<sup>lxxii</sup> Since I have reason to believe that I will not be able to complete the task of fully justifying the interpretation I have outlined in this essay, I hope others will complete it.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> See M XII 6 (1071b20).

<sup>lxxiv</sup> A fixed disposition, according to Aristotle, is a first actuality of a power of a substance to act or be acted upon in some way. It is the possession of a form by a substance, as opposed to the form possessed fulfilling its function, which is the second actuality of the power. It is, for instance, knowledge possessed by one who can exercise the knowledge, which is the form, knowledge, fulfilling its function. It is, as I will explain below, also light possessed by air or water as a form that enables a potential color, which is a color present in air or water that is not made transparent by light, be an actual color, which is a visible color. See C 8 (8b27–9a13), DA II 5 (417b16), DA II 7 (418b20–1), 324b17–8 and M XII 1070a11–2. I.

<sup>lxxv</sup> The contact, of course, is not the very same thing as physical contact, but of the sort that Aristotle says at M IX 10 (1051b24) the human intellect has with its object when there is simple thought.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> There are numerous ways in which the analogy between the agent intellect and light breaks down if we demand of it similarity in every respect. Aristotle uses the analogy only to point out a similarity in one respect, which is that of an agent causing what is potential to be actual.

<sup>lxxvii</sup> See DA II 7 (418b4–5).

<sup>lxxviii</sup> See DA II 7 (418b6–14).

<sup>lxxix</sup> This interpretation of what Aristotle means when he says that light makes potential colors be actual colors closely follows his DA II 7 account of how light causes a color to be visible. It has been thought by some scholars that when Aristotle says that light makes potential colors be actual colors he means that it makes colors present on the surfaces of physical objects be colors present

in the human soul as sense-impressions of the colors present on the surfaces. This is a possible interpretation of what Aristotle means. My interpretation, I believe, more closely follows what Aristotle says in DA II 7.

<sup>lxxx</sup> It might be objected to what Aristotle says, as opposed to how I interpret what he says, that the analogy to light fails, since light makes potential colors be actual colors only when it is present in its medium and is not always present in it, but the agent intellect must always be present in the human soul because it is always thinking. The reply to the objection is simply that the fact that light is not always present in the human is irrelevant to Aristotle's use of the analogy.

<sup>lxxx</sup> See DA III 4 (429a15, 429a 18 and 429b5).

<sup>lxxxii</sup> This is said later in DA III 5, at 430a23. It may also be to the agent intellect that Aristotle refers at GA (736b27f), where he says the intellect enters the human soul from the outside. Also, at DA II 2 (413b24–27), Aristotle says that the intellect alone can be separated [from the soul], just as that which is eternal from that which is destructible. That he is referring to what can be separated from the soul, as opposed to from the body, is clear from the context.

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> See GA IV 3 (768b15–9), where Aristotle says that only the first mover is exempt from reciprocal action.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> This is exactly what Aristotle says about the divine intellect at M XII 6 (1071b20). In GA II 3 (736b28), he says that the divine intellect enters the soul from outside because no bodily activity has any connection with the activity of the intellect.

<sup>lxxxv</sup> See M XII 6 (1071b20–1). Compare M XII 7 (1072b8–9). This characteristic by itself shows that the interpretation, that the agent intellect is a power of the human intellect, is wrong. Aristotle would not describe the agent intellect in terms that apply to the divine intellect as a separate substance if he thought that it is a power of the human intellect. No power or potentiality can be in essence an activity.

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> He uses the explanatory particle, *gar*, in the sentence.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> If the first three characteristic are shared by both intellect, the explanation of why the intellect, which is separate, unaffected, unmixed and in substance in activity, is more revered come to be even more problematic.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> See M XII 7 (1072b18–20).

<sup>lxxxix</sup> This implies, by the way, the presence of the divine intellect in the human soul.

<sup>xc</sup> Here again is another strong suggestion that the human intellect thinking itself is related to the divine intellect thinking itself.

<sup>xc</sup> See M XII 7 (1072b25–30).

<sup>xcii</sup> See M XII 9 (1074b35–1075a6). Aristotle does not literally say that the thinking the divine intellect is not incidental to itself, but he clearly implies that it is. That he makes this connection between divine and human thinking lends support to my interpretation of DA III 5.

<sup>xciii</sup> Although Aristotle does not literally say that the goodness of the divine intellect is the primary instance of goodness and the order of things in the sensible world is a secondary instance, he implies this because he argues that the order of things in the sensible world is good in dependence upon the goodness of the divine intellect, as the goodness of an army depends upon the goodness of its general. At NE VII (1153b32), Aristotle says that everything naturally has something of the divine in it.

<sup>xciv</sup> The thought (noema) the human intellect comes to be may be simple, in which case it is a concept, or complex, in which can it is a thought that is true or false or necessarily true. These are the sorts of thoughts with which Aristotle is basically concerned in DA III 4–8.

<sup>xcv</sup> See DA III 7 (431a1–4). Compare M IX 8 (1049b17–1050b3)

<sup>xcvi</sup> It seems likely that the statement of the principle has somehow been dropped from the text.

<sup>xcvii</sup> The proof for the existence of the unmoved mover in the *Metaphysics* is based on the existence of a property the divine intellect possesses, not on the existence of what it is by its own nature. Only after Aristotle has argued for the existence of an end for the sake of which the first heaven moves itself does he present a separate argument that shows what its essence is.

<sup>xcviii</sup> This is also true if he meant to imply above that the agent intellect is unaffected in a way the human intellect is not.

<sup>xcix</sup> See DA I 4(408b19–30).

<sup>c</sup> See DA I 4 (408b29).

<sup>ci</sup> See NE X 7 (1177b27–34).

<sup>cii</sup> In PA IV 10 (686a24–30), Aristotle says that the nature and substance of a human being is divine, but this most likely means that a human being, in comparison to other animals, is such, since the divine intellect is present in the soul of a human being.

<sup>ciii</sup> Aristotle tells us, at M XII 1 (1009a31–34), that there are three kinds of substances, sensible substances of two kinds, perishable and imperishable combinations of form and matter, both of which move, and immovable substances, which later in M XII he explains are forms without matter and are intellects that think themselves. The human intellect is not among the latter kind of substances, though its thinking, he implies, is caused by such a substance.

<sup>civ</sup> Plato attributes these views to Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*, where he claims to refute them. Aristotle believes that he himself refutes them in M III 4–5.

<sup>cv</sup> These views Plato expresses in the *Timaeus*.

<sup>cvi</sup> This view Aristotle expresses in M XII 10, DA II 4, and GA II 1.

<sup>cvi</sup> See especially Aristotle's statements of the origin of knowledge of form in sense-perception in PostA II 19 and M I 1–2.