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## **Giles's of Rome Criticism of Avicenna's Conception of the Unity of Agent Intellect**

### **Abstract**

The discussion with Islamic philosophy is one of the most important topics in the history of medieval philosophy. Furthermore, the criticism of the unity of intellect formulated by Christian medieval thinkers against Islamic interpreters of Aristotle, mostly against Averroes, is one of its most interesting elements. This element is well known and abundantly analyzed by medievalists. But a particular version of the theory of unity of intellect was formulated also by Avicenna who claimed that agent intellect, being the mover of the last celestial sphere, is one for all men. His conception, although not so popular in the Middle Ages as that of Averroes, was criticized by Giles of Rome, an eminent 13<sup>th</sup> century thinker, in his *Commentary to Aristotle's On the Soul*. The reconstruction of Giles's polemic against Avicenna shows that Islamic thinkers, although criticized by Christian thinkers, were read carefully by them and treated seriously as interpreters of Aristotle's thought.

### **1. Introduction**

The question on the unity of intellect was one of the most lively discussed topics in medieval philosophy. The debate on the unity of intellect was bound to different subfields of medieval thought. On the one hand, it involved the question of the individual reward in the future life because Christian theologians pointed out that the unity of the intellect undermined the essential element of the religious vision of the future life, namely the individual rewards for merits and respectively individual punishments for sins. Wanting to sharpen the whole question, they said that if the intellect were one for all men, the soul of Judas would be identical with the soul of St John and every other saint. On the other hand, the question of the unity or plurality of the intellect was also crucial for the

right interpretation of Aristotle's conception of the soul and cognition, as exposed in his *On the soul*<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the unity of the intellect was in the very centre of the theoretical interests of medieval theologians and philosophers. Moreover, Christian medieval thinkers thought that the thesis of the unity of the intellect was maintained by Islamic thinkers, and especially by Averroes. That is why monopsychism, the conception favouring the unity of intellect, was perceived by them as one element from the set of dangerous concepts coming from Islamic philosophy that questioned the Christian vision of God, world and man.

The best known and most often studied element of this controversy was the rejection of the thesis claiming that possible intellect (*intellectus possibilis*) is one for all human beings – the thesis ascribed to Averroes's *Great Commentary to Aristotle's On the Soul*<sup>2</sup>. The denial of Averroes's interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the soul engaged the most 13<sup>th</sup> century eminent thinkers, as Albert the Great, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and Giles of Rome<sup>3</sup>.

The question of the unity of agent intellect, by contrast, was not so often dealt with by the medieval scholars, and consequently was not so often presented by the historians of medieval thought. Most of medieval Christian thinkers said that the unity of agent intellect should be disproved the analogical way that the unity of possible intellect<sup>4</sup>. But there was a thinker who paid more attention to the question of the unity of agent intellect, namely aforementioned Giles of Rome<sup>5</sup>. In his *Commentary to Aristotle's On the Soul*<sup>6</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, III, 5, 430a 11ff.

<sup>2</sup> Averrois Cordubensis *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, rec. F.S. Crawford, (Corpus Commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem, VI, 1) Cambridge, Mass. 1953, III, comm. 5, pp. 387, 9-409, 653. Cf. H.B. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, Oxford 1992; about the adequacy of the Christian reading of Averroes cf. O. Leaman, *Is Averroes an Averroist*, in: *Averroismus. Im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, ed. F. Niewöhner, L. Sturlese, Zürich 1994, pp. 9-22.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Albertus Magnus, *Libellus de unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, ed. A. Hufnagel, Aschendorff 1975 (*Opera omnia*, t. XVII/1, pp. 1-29); Bonaventura, *In secundum librum Sententiarum*, dist. 18, qu. 2, art. 1, corp., Ad Claras Aquas 1886ff., (*Opera omnia*, t. II, pp. 446a-447a), *Collationes de decem praeceptis*, II, 25 (t. V, p. 514b); Thomas de Aquino, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, ed. Leonina, Roma 1976 (*Opera omnia*, t. XLIII, pp. 289-314); Aegidius Romanus, *De plurificatione possibilis intellectus*, ed. M. Olszewski, in: Siger z Brabancji, Tomasz z Akwinu, Idzi Rzymianin, *Spór o jedność intelektu*, Kęty 2008 (Ad fontes, t. IX), pp. 298-374. Literature concerning this theme is abundant, see. e.g. G. Verbecke, *L'unité de l'homme: Saint Thomas contre Averroès*, „Revue philosophique de Louvain” 58 (1960), pp. 220-249; E.-H. Webér, *Personne humaine au XIIIe siècle*, Paris 1991 and a commentary to a French translation of Aquinas's *De unitate: Thomas d'Aquin, Contre Averroès*, trad. A. de Libera, Paris 1997.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Thomas de Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles*, II, cap. 76-77.

<sup>5</sup> Giles (OESA, †1316) belongs to the generation of the disciples of Thomas Aquinas. He was the most significant thinker of the Augustinian Order, engaged in all the crucial intellectual discussions of the period, from the issue of the difference between essence and existence to the extension of the secular power of the pope. General information about Giles and a small bibliography can be found in V. Lambertini, *Giles of Rome*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/giles>.

<sup>6</sup> Aegidius Romanus, *Expositio super libros De anima*, Venetiis 1496-1497. The *Commentary* came into existence probably in 1277-1278, see S. Donati, *Studi per una cronologia delle opere di Egidio Romano. I:*

Giles argues that agent intellect<sup>7</sup> is multiple and proper to each human being and, moreover, he identifies Avicenna, another Islamic thinker important for Christian scholars, as the author of it.

## 2. Avicenna's error

Giles's analysis of the problem of the unity vs. multiplicity of agent intellect assumes some fundamental theses characteristic of his interpretation of Aristotle's conception of soul. They were formulated in the passages previous to the criticism of Avicenna. Firstly, Giles accepts Aristotle's definition of soul as the first act of organic body<sup>8</sup>. Then, he asserts that soul and body constitute unity<sup>9</sup>, that the proper activity of the whole composite being is determined by the form, i.e. by soul, and that intellectual cognition is man's proper activity<sup>10</sup>. Further, he confirms that intellect is immaterial<sup>11</sup> and that it relates to its proper objects in the same way that senses relate to theirs, although it is not a corporeal virtue<sup>12</sup>.

Secondly, Giles puts forward two more specific statements: 1) Intellect has to be immanent in man if man is going to be a subject of cognition (i.e. a cognizer) and not its object<sup>13</sup>. This thesis is a reminiscence of the main Thomas Aquinas's objection

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*Le opere prima del 1285 – I commenti aristotelici*, "Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale" 1 (1990), pp. 1–111; see pp. 48–55.

<sup>7</sup> In his *Commentary to On the Soul*, Giles speaks about the problem of the unity of possible intellect only once and very briefly. He mentions it while wondering whether intellectual cognition is an action of the whole man or merely an action of the soul. In a solution to this question, Giles asserts that all man's actions result from the collaboration of body and soul. He adds subsequently that this thesis could serve as a critical base against Averroes' monopsychism. It is because it states that intellectual soul is a substantial form of man: „Hanc autem veritatem specialiter debent exprimere et confiteri catholici tractatores, videlicet quod secundum proprietatem locutionis non dicamus, quod anima intelligat, sed homo per animam. Quo posito oportet concedere animam intellectivam esse formam corporis et multiplicari secundum multitudinem corporum, immo cum ipse idem Averroes hoc concedat, quod anima non addiscat nec distinguat, sed homo hoc faciat per animam, ab ipsa veritate coactus, oportet dicere animam intellectivam esse formam corporis et non esse unum intellectum in omnibus, sed plurificari secundum plurificationem animarum intellectivarum; huiusmodi autem animam secundum hoc plurificari oportet secundum plurificationem corporum”, *Ibid.*, I, f. 18ra. Apart from that, however, *Expositio* lacks any more elaborate discussion of the theory of the unity of intellect. It is probably due to the fact that Giles must have decided not to repeat his argumentation from earlier *De plurificatione*: „Esset autem ulterius dubitandum, cum sit intellectus immixtus, impassibilis et ab organo separatus, utrum oporteat ipsum multiplicari secundum multiplicationem corporum vel sit in omnibus unus. Sed quia de hoc speciale tractatum fecimus et hanc quaestionem diffuse discussimus, ideo de hoc volumus silentio pertransire”. *Ibid.*, III, f. 68va.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, II, f. 24ra. Cf. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, II, 1, 412a 30–32.

<sup>9</sup> Aegidius Romanus, *Expositio in libros De anima*, II, f. 24va.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, II, f. 28va.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, III, f. 66ra.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, III, f. 65vb.

<sup>13</sup> „Notandum etiam, quod sicut formaliter actus calefaciendi non potest competere nisi ei, quod habet calorem in actu, sic actus intelligendi non potest competere nisi ei, cui inest intellectus in actu. Et species intelligibilis

directed against Averroes<sup>14</sup>. 2) Intellect is a form of man which is intermediary between separated forms and material forms<sup>15</sup>. The acceptance of soul as something intermediary between material and immaterial forms is related to the assertion that the essence of soul is subject – understood here as *substratum* – of intellect.

This set of contentions is the most general frame – or the most fundamental premise – of Giles's noetics, i.e. a theory of intellect. Giles bases his understanding of intellect, on the one hand, on immateriality, and on the other, on the thesis claiming that intellect is a substantial form of man or otherwise it could not be a separated substance common to many individuals.

Giles begins with the argumentation which justifies the necessity of agent intellect. He maintains, namely, that such necessity does not exist in Plato's system where ideas are the proper object of cognition which is intelligible by itself. But in Aristotle's epistemology, it is sensual data that are the proper object of cognition which is intelligible only *in potentia*. Hence, there must be something in intellect that makes what is intelligible *in potentia* intelligible *in actu* – and this is agent intellect<sup>16</sup>.

Besides, agent intellect has another important function in human cognition: it is an organ of man's self-knowledge. The question of man's cognition of himself is the most important application of Giles's conception of agent intellect. He claims that intellect is something which exists between material and immaterial forms. Its self-knowledge is a feature common to agent intellect and other separated substances. The process of acquiring knowledge of itself is different in both cases. Separated substances know themselves directly (*per se*). Cognition of such a kind is not possible for human intellect because it has different nature, close to the nature of material things. Agent intellect knows itself due to the act of cognition of extramental things; next, it comprehends its own act of cognition and, consequently, itself as a subject of this act<sup>17</sup>. Hence, it is now evident that Giles's thesis which asserts that intellect is something intermediary between material and immaterial forms refers to both kinds of intellect.

Besides, agent intellect enables knowledge to become identical with its object, which is also a characteristic of separated substances. However, the mechanism of accomplishing this process is different in both cases. This identity is given to separated substances *per se*, but agent intellect has to use cognitive species in order to accomplish it<sup>18</sup>.

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est in intellectu nostro et non in obiecto materiali, ideo intellectus noster poterit intelligere, non autem materiale obiectum". Ibid., III, f. 70va.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus*, cap. 3, pp. 301–304.

<sup>15</sup> „Cum anima sit media inter formas simpliciter immateriales, ut inter intellectivas, et formas simpliciter materiales, ut inter has formas sensibiles, participat aliquid de condicione utroque ita, quod habet aliquas virtutes materiales et organicas, ut potentias sensitivas, aliquas vero habet immateriales, ut intellectivas. Virtutes ergo materiales ut in subiecto fundatur in organis, ut visus fundatur in organo, scilicet in oculo. Intellectus vero in subiecto fundatur in ipsa essentia animae ita, quod eodem modo comparatur quodammodo anima ad intellectum, sicut oculus comparatur ad sensum visus". Aegidius Romanus, *Expositio in libros De anima*, III, f. 67rb.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., f. 71ra.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., III, f. 69rb.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., III, f. 70rb-70va.

Moreover, Giles asserts that some other theses – usually claimed of possible intellect – pertain to agent intellect, as well. Here I mean, above all, Aristotle's statement that intellect is *species specierum*. Giles comments on this assertion extensively<sup>19</sup>.

He starts with explanation of relations between both intellects comparing them with two properties of a cat's eye, namely reflecting of the light and shining. When reflecting the light, cat's eye accepts colours and, simultaneously, by shining, it enlightens the medium in which they are accepted. The final result of these operations is a real act of vision. The following theses constitute the core of this metaphor. 1) It is possible for one and the same thing to have two different properties that accomplish two different functions in the same operation. 2) Execution of such operation is possible only if these properties have their fundament in one and the same substance<sup>20</sup>.

Drawing an analogy between examples quoted above and functioning of human intellect, Giles states that they differ because of their roles played in the process of cognition. Soul accepts all species by means of possible intellect and agent intellect makes them really intelligible. What they have in common is that they are virtues of one substance and that thanks to them soul can reach its perfection. This identity of the subject in which they are rooted and the unity of an operation that is accomplished by them allows us to ascribe the aforementioned sentence of Aristotle – intellect is *species specierum* – to both kinds of intellect.

The strong connections between the intellects and their common subject form the basis for another reasoning. Giles rejects possibility of knowing anything without sensual data. It may seem – as he asserts – that it is enough to perceive any object once and to form its concept in possible intellect and, subsequently, to keep it in intellect. A single act of cognition should be sufficient for intellect to know the whole class of things. Giles claims that such theory of cognition was formulated by Avicenna. According to the Augustinian Master, this theory is wrong, since it implies that having

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., III, f. 76rb.

<sup>20</sup> „Intellectus ergo agens, qui se habet quasi lux et est movens intellectum possibilem propter perfectionem cognitionis intellectivae, erit eadem substantia cum ipso intellectu possibili. Lucem ergo corporalem, quae est motiva oculi, esse separata ab oculo, tamen radicari in eodem subiecto cum oculo non est inconveniens, quia cognitio sensitiva est imperfecta respectu cognitionis intellectivae. Dicere ergo intellectum agentem esse separatum, vel dicere intellectum possibilem non habere proprium movens, quod sit sui generis et quod radicetur in eadem substantia cum ipso, est omnino inconveniens, cum videamus in rebus corporalibus, quod perfectiora moventur ex se et in ipsis proprium movens est coniunctum proprio moto et proprium agens proprio passivo. Sic ergo imaginabimur intellectum agentem et intellectum possibilem, sicut videmus, quod in oculo cati radicatur duplex passio et duplex proprietas, ut diaphanitas et luminositas. Sunt enim oculi catorum non solum diaphani, sed etiam lucidi, ut apparet, quia, cum sunt in obscuro, eorum oculi scintillant quasi stellae. Oculus ergo cati per diaphanitatem suscipit colorum species, sed per illuminositatem illuminat medium et facit colores actu visibiles, quare oculus cati per diaphanitatem est omnes species colorum fieri, sed per luminositatem est omnes species tales facere. Sic in eadem substantia animae radicantur intellectus possibilem et intellectus agentem ita, quod per intellectum possibilem anima suscipit omnes species intelligibiles et est omnes species tales fieri, sed per intellectum agentem irradiat super phantasmata et est omnes tales species facere. Uterque intellectus est quodammodo omnes species aliter tamen et aliter, quia possibilis, ut patet, est omnes species fieri, agens vero est omnes facere”. Ibid., III, f. 76va-vb.

known any species once we will have it forever<sup>21</sup>. But, according to Giles, men are able to know one and the same thing or species many times. Hence, he rises two points against Avicenna's opinion. Firstly, sensual things become proper objects of cognition as general. Man has, however, to perceive them as singular and particular before they become abstracted in his mind. So, man must begin any of his acts of cognition with sensible things. Secondly, a form, after having been known, remains in intellect not in a perfect and accomplished act but *in actu semipleno et incompleto*. Therefore, in order to know species repeatedly man needs sensual data<sup>22</sup>.

Thus, it is evident that Giles consequently defends the empiricist interpretation of Aristotle's *On the Soul* against Neoplatonic version of Aristotelianism put forward by Avicenna. The epistemological conflict is followed by differences in noetics. Giles connects empiricism with individuality of intellect because intellect operates with sensual data stored in individual imagination. On the contrary, Avicenna's theory admits possibility of a cognition without sensual objects. According to Avicenna, intellect can be seen as the last of the series of separated substances common to all mankind which allows people a direct cognition of intelligibles. Giles criticises openly the ontological part of Avicenna's theory, i.e. the thesis that agent intellect is the last of celestial spheres and is one for all men<sup>23</sup>.

Giles begins his criticism with the exposition of the question which introduces Themistius as its author<sup>24</sup>. Next comes Avicenna's standpoint which is the proper target of his attacks<sup>25</sup>. Subsequently, Giles points out that Avicenna's theory includes two false theses. The first one is the Avicennian conception of felicity understood as conjunction with agent intellect<sup>26</sup>. Giles' critique, however, does not concern the unity of

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., III, f. 76vb.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., III, f. 77ra.

<sup>23</sup> The general thread of Giles' criticism of Avicenna's thesis claiming that agent intellect is one for all men is modelled on Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles*, II, cap. 76–77, however, formulations employed by Giles are relatively independent and original.

<sup>24</sup> „Alterius forte dubitaret aliquis, ut dubitaret Themistius, utrum intellectus agens sit sic separabilis, quod non sit pars animae nec sit potentia animae, sed sit quaedam substantia separata, et videtur, quod sic per verba Philosophi dicentis, quod est actu ens”. Aegidius Romanus, *Expositio in libros De anima*, III, f. 71rb.

<sup>25</sup> „Quosdam fuisse huius opinionis, quod intellectus agens esset unus numero in omnibus et esset una aliqua substantia separata. Ut sicut unus sol totum universum illuminat, per cuius illuminationem possunt omnes oculi videre, sic est una aliqua substantia separata irradians super phantasmata omnium hominum, per cuius irradiationem possunt omnes homines intelligere. Cuius opinionis videtur fuisse Avicenna ponens decimam intelligentiam, quae praeerat decimae sphaerae. Videtur sphaerae activorum et passivorum esse intelligentiam illam, a qua dependebat nostra felicitas ita, quod tota felicitas nostra secundum ipsum est in coniunctione intellectus nostri ad intelligentiam illam. Itaque intelligentiam illam posuit intellectum agentem per cuius irradiationem phantasmata singulorum hominum movebant sigulos intellectos posibles”. Ibid., III, f. 71rb–va.

<sup>26</sup> „Hanc atque positionem duas falsitates continere dicimus. Quarum prima est, quod finalis felicitas nostra consistit in coniunctione intellectus nostri ad decimam intelligentiam, quod impossibile est, quia finale bonum nostrum consistit in coniunctione intellectus nostri ad aliquod bonum causatum. Nam, cum naturale sit, quod nunquam quiescat intellectus cognito effectu, nisi cognoscat causam, oportet nos quietari in bono illo, quod ita sit causa, quod nullomodo causatum sit. Nam ex cognitione effectus et ex ignorantia causae non est quies, sed admiratio, ut potest haberi ex primo *Metaphysicae*. Hoc modo enim ex admirari ceperunt philosophari, ut dicitur ibidem, quia

its object, thus being of less interest for us. The Augustinian Master says that the ultimate felicity requires cognition of the highest possible object, i.e. God. The second one is just a recognition of agent intellect as a separated substance common to all men<sup>27</sup>.

Giles rises two points against this thesis. The first one is based on the government of will over intellect: it can be experienced by anybody since one knows when one wants to know. Such a power of will over intellect is possible only when agent intellect depends on will. If it were a separated substance, it would be independent of man. Therefore, it cannot be a separated substance<sup>28</sup>. He asserts that act of cognition has to be subordinated to man's will and that the opposite situation – in which intellect dominates over will and connects with man when it wants – must be excluded, since, otherwise, the animation of the dead would have to be possible. Thus, it is evident that the main premise of both arguments is the same, i.e., that intellect depends on will.

The second contends that agent intellect cannot be a separated substance, since, like possible intellect, it is a perfection and virtue of soul. Consequently, they share the same ontological status and their ontological unity can be inferred from their collaboration in the process of acquiring by man perfection of his cognition<sup>29</sup>. This fragment ends with rejection of a possible difficulty against the thesis claiming that intellect is a virtue of soul: if it is a substance existing in an act, it cannot be a virtue of another substance. Giles explains that the term 'substance' is ambiguous and using it to designate intellect does not exclude that it is a virtue of soul<sup>30</sup>.

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videntes effectus mirabiles, ut puta eclipses solares, lunares et coniunctiones siderum admirati non quiescebant, donec investigare etiam causas. In cognitione ergo effectus non potest esse quies, nec felicitas. Illud ergo, a quo dependet nostra felicitas, oportet, quod, sit causa non causata, scilicet Deus ipse". Ibid., III, f. 71va.

<sup>27</sup> „Secunda autem falsitas est, quia ponit intellectum agentem esse quamdam substantiam separatam. Quod autem non sit hoc de intentione Aristotelis, plane patet per lecturam, ubi dicitur, quod in anima necesse est ponere has duas differentias et hos duos intellectus, quorum unus sit omnia fieri, alter omnia facere. Non ergo intellectus agens est aliquid separatum ab anima. Quod etiam hoc non solum non esset de intentione Aristotelis, sed etiam sit falsum, duplici via investigare possumus". Ibid., III, f. 71va.

<sup>28</sup> „Quorum una est Themistii, nam in potestate nostra est intelligere, cum volumus, postquam habuimus species intelligibiles, ut quilibet in seipso experitur. Cum ergo quantumcumque habuerimus apud nos species intelligibiles, non possumus actu intelligere, nisi speculemur iterum phantasmata et nisi super ipsa phantasmata fiat irradiatio luminis intellectus agentis. Sed si huiusmodi lumen esset a nobis separatum, non esset in potestate nostra, quod talis irradiatio fieret, quare habentes apud nos species intelligibiles non esset in potestate nostra, quod possemus intelligere, cum vellemus, sicut praesentibus visibilibus, eo quod lumen solis sit a nobis separatum, non est in potentia nostra videre, cum volumus, quia non est in potestate nostra semper habere praesentiam luminis, eo quod lumen corporale, per quod actu videmus, non est in nobis, sed est aliquid separatum". Ibid., III, f. 71va.

<sup>29</sup> „Secunda via ad investigandum hoc idem sumitur ex perfectione cognitionis intellectivae, sed de hoc infra dicemus, ubi plenius declarabitur, quod intellectus agens est quaedam perfectio et quaedam virtus animae et non est substantia separata". Ibid., III, f. 71va. Giles probably means here the fragment describing diversity in functions and substantial unity of both intellects quoted in note 22.

<sup>30</sup> „Quod vero dicebatur, quod intellectus agens est substantia actu ens, ergo non est perfectio et potentia animae, sed est substantia quaedam, oportet dicere, quod, ut declarari habet quinto *Metaphysicae*, substantia sumi potest multipliciter. Uno enim modo, ut ibi dicitur, substantia potest dicere quamlibet essentiam vel quamlibet rem cuiuslibet praedicamenti. Intellectus itaque agens, quia est aliqua perfectio et aliqua virtus animae, est aliqua essentia

### 3. Concluding remarks

Giles' argumentation against Avicenna's conception of agent intellect fits very well the commonly shared by 13<sup>th</sup> century Christian thinkers opinion about the unity of intellect. The most fundamental premise for combating monopsychism is the immanent character of human intellect. Thus, Giles – as his famous forerunners, Albert the Great, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas<sup>31</sup> – fights against opinion that attributes separate status to intellect and struggles for maximal individualisation of it. This thesis, present also in Giles's crucial anti-Averroistic text, namely in his *De plurificatione intellectus possibilis*<sup>32</sup>, constitutes indeed a very core of the whole polemics of the Christian scholastics with the interpretation of Aristotle's noetics proposed by Islamic philosophers, namely by Avicenna and Averroes. In Avicenna's and Averroes's commentaries to Aristotle's *On the Soul*, in spite of the obvious differences between their standpoints, everyone can easily notice that they are akin to interpret the Stagirite's treatise as an ontological text. They perceive various kinds of intellects about which Aristotle speaks as entities that are different and distinct from each other as well from human beings. Therefore, their noetics takes form of ontology, whereas the noetics put forward by the Christian philosophers is first of all epistemology. Giles, as Aquinas and Albert the Great before, reads *On the Soul* as if it were a treatise devoted to epistemology. Hence, according to him, intellects are not self-standing beings, but only correlates of the cognitive operations performed by soul of every individual man.

From the point of view of the history of ideas, apart from the content of the analysed doctrine, the form in which discussion was carried on is of a special interest. As it has been already mentioned, the theory of the unity of intellect seemed to question some essential teachings of Christianity. Therefore, it is not surprising that refutations of monopsychism were often very emotional and a polemic fervour sometimes dominated over objectivity and adequacy of the presentation of the rejected conceptions. Giles's *Expositio*, however, is an example of the opposite. His presentation of Avicenna's position seems quite fair, although brief, and the tone of his argumentation is objective and very matter-of-fact. He treats Avicenna as important and relevant thinker, who obviously made a mistake, but who must be taken into consideration and who deserves attention when the interpretation of Aristotle's *On the Soul* is to be undertaken.

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et aliqua res praedicamenti, est enim in secunda specie qualitatis, quia est quaedam naturalis potentia animae et quia est quaedam essentia et quaedam res praedicamenti, quaedam substantia dici potest". Ibid., III, f. 71va.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas de Aquino, *De unitate intellectus*, cap. 3, pp. 301–303.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. B. Nardi, *Egidio Romano e l'averroismo*, „Rivista di storia della filosofia” 3 (1948), pp. 2–29; M. Olszewski, *De plurificatione intellectus possibilis of Giles of Rome. Two Historical Questions*, „Studia Mediewistyczne” 32 (1997), pp. 123–135; B.F. Conolly, *Averroes, Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome on How This Man Understands*, „Vivarium” 45 (2007), pp. 69–92.

This fact<sup>33</sup> can throw some light on the question of relation between Islamic and Christian thought in the Middle Ages. On the one hand, one can often hear that medieval Christian philosophy, or even science in general, was borrowed from the Arabs, and on the other, that Islamic philosophy, especially Averroistic interpretation of Aristotle, was perceived by the 13<sup>th</sup> century Christian thinkers as the greatest menace to Christianity. Thus, we face seemingly irreconcilable contradiction. But I hope that this contradiction can be till some degree explained by means of the careful reading of Giles's discussion with Avicenna. It is obvious that, according to Giles, Avicenna is an intellectual authority, especially when the right interpretation of Aristotle's heritage is needed – when Giles wants to understand Aristotle's *On the soul*, he refers to Avicenna. But Giles is simultaneously aware that Avicenna offers a particular reading of Aristotle, sometimes misleading and consequently deserving corrections. Thus, it is manifest that medieval Christian philosophy is in a way inconceivable without Islamic one, but at the same time it is clear that the former cannot be reduced to the reception of the latter. Islamic thinkers were intellectual partners of the Christians, sometimes accepted, sometimes rejected and criticised, but always read with attention.

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<sup>33</sup> It worth to be noted here that the same can be said about Giles's attitude toward Averroes presented in *De plurificatione possibilis intellectus*. This shows that features characteristic of Giles's *Expositio* are not accidental.