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# Philosophy of Intellect and Vision in the De anima of Themistius

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## Philosophy of Intellect and Vision in the *De anima* of Themistius

Themistius (317–c. 387) was born into an aristocratic family and ran a paripatetic school of philosophy in Constantinople in the mid-fourth century, between 345 and 355. He made use of Alexander's *De anima* in his commentary on the *De anima* of Aristotle, which is considered to be the earliest surviving commentary on Aristotle's work, as Alexander's commentary itself did not survive. Themistius may also have been influenced by Plotinus, and Porphyry (232–309), whom he criticizes. Themistius refers often to works of Plato, especially the *Timaeus*, and attempts a synthesis of Aristotle and Plato, a synthesis which was continued in the Neoplatonic tradition. As it has been seen in Alexander that thought and perception are intimately connected, almost identical, Themistius goes to much greater length to differentiate the two. Sense perception must be distinguished from reasoning, because all animals are capable of sense perception, while only humans are capable of reasoning; while there are only five kinds of sense perception, there are many varieties of the capacity for reasoning; and the functions of sense perception and reasoning can be differentiated.

In contrasting sense perception and reason, Themistius does not distinguish between the types of reason as established in the Aristotelian tradition: intellect (*nous*), thinking (*noêsis*), capacity for reasoning (*logikê dunamis*), and discursive thinking (*dianoia*). Thinking is divided into the capacity for imagination and the capacity for judgment, and the two are clearly distinguished, as belief and assent play no role in imagination. Imagination is that part of thinking which is most closely related to sense perception, because imagination depends on the reception of the image, the *species sensibilis*, and the retention of the image in thought, the mnemonic residue. Imagination is a necessary precondition for intellect, but the two must still be distinguished. Imagination is the process in which an image or *phantasma* “comes to exist in us” (*De anima* 89)<sup>1</sup> as an imprint or *tupos* and “form of the sense-

impression” or *aisthêma* in the soul or *anima rationalis*. It is concluded from this that imagination is a capacity or *hexeis* of the soul for discernment, excluding the faculties of belief or assent. Imagination must be a faculty for discernment for Themistius because the *phantasma* must be in part a product of thought and not just a pure imprint of the sensible object; it must be a *species apprehensibilis*, an intelligible, and not just a *species sensibilis*.

A similar relation between the *phantasma* and intellection can be found in the thought of Robert Grosseteste. In the treatise *De statu causarum*, the *anima rationalis* is described as an incorporeal intelligence mediating corporeal *virtus*, the motion of which in the senses are the *phantasmata*, mnemonic residues of sense impressions, of the *imaginatio*. In the treatise *De motu supercaelestium*, the faculty of sense perception is controlled by the *vis apprehensiva* of the *anima rationalis*; sense perception is seen more as a function of intellection than as distinguished from it; sense perception in the human being must be different than sense perception in the animal. Sense perception is assisted by *sensus communis*; *imaginatio*, the formation of the *phantasmata* in the *oculus mentis*; and *memoria*, the retention of the traces or mnemonic residues of the *phantasmata*; as such sense perception allows knowledge to be possible, following Aristotle: the *scientia*, knowledge gained by abstraction in reason, and the *intellectus*, the knowledge of first principles or intelligibles; but sense perception is not the cause of knowledge. Sense perception alone cannot apprehend universals, which are the materials of knowledge. The *phantasma* of sense perception alone cannot produce intellection, as for Themistius. Because the *species sensibilis*, the form of the object, in sense perception is connected to material objects for Grosseteste, sense perception restricts the incorporeal *virtus* of *intellectus* to a certain extent, as it might for Themistius.

In the *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics* of Grosseteste, the *intelligentia*, as the highest part of the *anima rationalis*, has complete knowledge of both singulars and universals, because it is illuminated by a radiated light, the *irradiatio spiritualis*, or *lumen spiritualis*, and it is separated from the clouded body in sense perception, in the same way that the *anima rationalis* is separated from the body. The *phantasma* in sense perception is clouded in its connection to the corporeal, sensible object, and as such cannot facilitate intellection of itself. But *intelligentia* is separated from the *phantasmata* of corporeal objects in the imagination, or *imaginatio*, the lower function of *intellectus*. Sense perception supports the *anima rationalis*, but it is lower and separated from it, as in Themistius; but for Grosseteste it is caused by it ra-

ther than being the cause of it, in contrast to Themistius. The *virtus scitiva* and *virtus cogitativa*, the lower functions of discursive reason in intellect as described by Grosseteste, are more weighed down by the corporeal *species sensibilis* in the *phantasmata* of the *imaginatio*, and are limited in their abilities of intellection. Through the corporeal experience of sense perception, the knowledge on the part of the *anima rationalis* of the *phantasmata* as mnemonic residues in the *imaginatio* or *phantasia* of the mind's eye or *oculus mentis* is clouded or forgotten, and the *anima rationalis* is not aware of the correspondence being made in intellection in the process of perception, and takes the sense perception to be immediate of the sensible object, as the *anima rationalis* is weighed down by its corporeity. This is the definition of the distinction between discursive thinking or *dianoia* in the *logikê dunamis*, and *noêsis* in *nous*, between the sensible and intelligible.

In the *Hexaameron* of Grosseteste, "Our memory, when it has received and retained a memory form, is not always actually remembering" (VIII, IV, 12),<sup>2</sup> as it is in a state of passive intellection, tied to its corporeity. But then "when it passes from not actually remembering to actually remembering," that is, when it has been activated by an agent intellect in the *irradiatio spiritualis*, "it begets and expresses from itself the actual intellection or understanding that is in every way like to itself," in the activity of active intellect, *virtus intellectiva*. The distinguishing of intellection from sense perception for Grosseteste depends on the activity of the productive intellect as described by Alexander of Aphrodisias, that element of intellect which, as an agent of active intellect, allows material or potential intellect to be actual, to separate itself from the corporeal in sense perception, and to be able to perceive the intelligible in relation to the sense object, the *species apprehensibilis* in relation to the *species sensibilis*.

According to Grosseteste, through intellection, and the aspiration of the *anima rationalis* to see clearly the *intelligentia* through the *irradiatio spiritualis* in the *virtus intellectiva*, as activated by the active intellect, the *anima rationalis* becomes aware of the *species apprehensibilis* in relation to the *species sensibilis* in the process of perception, and it becomes aware of the relation between human intellect and the sensible world.

The *aspectus mentis* of Grosseteste is the ability of the mind to grasp ideas through the perception of visual forms, functioning separately from sense perception; the ability of the *oculus mentis* to perceive the intelligible connected with the *species apprehensibilis*, which is related to the *species sensibilis*, in that for Grosseteste, as for Alexander of Aphrodisias, in con-

trast to Themistius, the *species sensibilis* is always already a product of the *species apprehensibilis* in intellection in perception. The *oculus mentis* sees the intelligible in the *irradiatio spiritualis* of the *intelligentia* in Grosseteste's thought. He explained in the *Hexaameron*, "the species begotten in the fantasy [imagination or *imaginatio*] of the common sense," the *sensus communis*, "begets of itself a species that is like it in the memory" (VIII, IV, 9), as a trace or mnemonic residue, which corresponds to the presently perceived sensible object. Then, "the species that can be apprehended by the reason, intellect or understanding" (VIII, IV, 10), the *species apprehensibilis*, projects its likeness (*similitudo*) in the *virtus intellectiva* in the process of perception, illuminated by the inner light, the *irradiatio spiritualis*, and the mind connects the begotten likeness with the form perceived, the *species sensibilis*. As a result, "effective apprehension" is achieved, which might correspond to the "capacity for discernment" of Themistius, in contrast to belief and assent, which are functions of the lower part of the *anima rationalis*, tied to the corporeal in sense perception, in discursive reason.

In the *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics* (II.6) of Grosseteste, memory receives the *species sensibilis* as integrated and synthesized, as *species apprehensibilis*, in the *sensus communis*, and it receives the *intentiones* connected with the *species*, the capacity for discernment of intellect, as detected by the *vis aestimativa*, a function of the higher *anima rationalis*. *Memoria* as a function of intellection involves the imagination, *imaginatio* or *phantasia*, the retention of the *species sensibilis*, and the *memoria proprie dicta*, the retention of the *intentiones aestimatae*, the function of intellection not tied to the corporeal, in the integration of the concept formed in the *virtus intellectiva* to produce the *species apprehensibilis*. Memory is created from sense perception, and universals in discursive reason result from memory, but not as separated from particulars; they are separated from particulars by the *virtus intellectiva*, as activated by the active intellect.

According to Themistius, sense perception must be distinguished from imagination because imagination occurs in sleep while sense perception does not. Imagination thus requires an unconscious thought activity, something other than discursive reason, but not self-conscious, an element of *noesis* as a product of active intellect, intellect from without. While sense perception is both potential and actual, like material intellect, both tied to the sensible object and incorporeal, potential sense perception, the engagement with the sensible, corporeal object, does not occur in dreams. Dreams only consist of the residues of sense perception, the mnemonic residues of the traces of the im-

prints, or *enkataleimmata*, as the *species apprehensibilis*, involving the intelligible as a product of active intellect. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud described the formation of a dream image as a combination of the mnemonic residue or visual residue of sense perception, the “thing presentation” (*Sachvorstellung*, or *Dingvorstellung*), and the auditory residue in thinking, the “word presentation” (*Wortvorstellung*). Both the *Sachvorstellung* and the *Wortvorstellung* are incorporeals, intelligibles as the *species apprehensibilis*, disconnected from sense perception. Both are the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, the representation of the representation, the product of intellection in *noesis*.

The formation of the dream image involves the transition from the “latent content,” the thought in the dream or the *Wortvorstellung*, to the “manifest content,” the visual image of the dream or *Sachvorstellung*, in a “concern for representability,” according to Freud. The coexistence of the *Sachvorstellung* and the *Wortvorstellung* in the *Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*, in the writing of the dream, is a “double inscription” (*Niederschrift*) which involves condensation and displacement, linguistic mechanisms in discursive reason. The *Niederschrift* is the quality of the hieroglyph, the simultaneity of the word and the image, which would be impossible to comprehend in discursive reason itself. The manifest content is the content of the memory of the dream, the mnemonic residues of sense perception, while the latent content, the “dream thought,” is the product of the conceptual analysis of the dream in discursive reason. The latent content of the dream is not a content of the memory of the dream itself, but something which is ascribed to it by conscious thought.

Freud sees a direct relationship between the dream thought and the dream content in the same way as there is a direct relationship between the signifier and the signified in linguistics, the sound of the word and the idea associated with the word, as sensible object and intelligible, as two sides of a piece of paper, and the transcription between the two is governed by a complex system of rules which operates according to a logic which does not always correspond to discursive or conscious reason. The mechanisms of representation in the dream, as they are developed between the dream thought and the dream image, are different from conscious mechanisms of representation in the intersection of perception and language, although the mnemonic residues of dream memories are derived from those of sensible perception, and the linguistic mechanisms of representation in the unconscious, or in *noesis*, are derived from conscious language, as they might be made ac-

tual by an active intellect.

Dream thoughts and dream content are for Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “two versions of the same subject-matter” presented in two different languages in a kind of transcript “whose characters and syntactic laws it is our business to discover by comparing the original and the translation” (pp. 311–312).<sup>3</sup> Dream content is seen as a “pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of dream thoughts” in a signifying relation. Relations between dream images depend on relations between dream thoughts in a syntactical matrix based on discursive reason. The mechanism of the transposition from dream thoughts to dream images is labeled *imagination* by Freud, as Themistius described imagination as the process in which a *phantasma* comes to exist in us as a *tupos* or *aisthêma* in the *anima rationalis*, involving the faculty of discernment, and Grosseteste described the *anima rationalis* as an incorporeal intelligence mediating corporeal *virtus*, the motion of which in the senses are the *phantasmata* of the *imaginatio*.

Themistius points out that it is difficult to distinguish between the activity of perception and the activity of imagination in relation to the sense object as it is perceived, that is, between the *species sensibilis* and the *species apprehensibilis*, and the activities of discursive reason and *nous*. Such a distinction would require a consciousness of the influence of active intellect, and a self-consciousness of reason in perception. Imagination is active while sense perception focuses on the object; sense perception acts on the sensible object as imagination acts on sense perception. The imprint is formed as *species sensibilis* and *species apprehensibilis* simultaneously, but the *species apprehensibilis* endures in *memoria* while the *species sensibilis* does not. As in the *Republic* of Plato, when “the mind’s eye [*oculus mentis*] is fixed on objects illuminated by truth and reality [*species apprehensibilis*, illuminated by active intellect, or by *intelligentia* in the *irradiatio spiritualis* of Grosseteste], it understands and knows them, and its possession of intelligence [active intellect] is evident; but when it is fixed on the twilight world of change and decay [*species sensibilis*, *phantasma*], it can only form opinions [the belief and assent of Themistius], its vision is confused and its opinions shifting, and it seems to lack intelligence” (508d5).

For Grosseteste, in the *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*, because the *species sensibilis*, the form of the object, in sense perception is connected to material objects, sense perception restricts the incorporeal *virtus* of *intellectus* to a certain extent. The *intelligentia*, active intellect, as the highest part

of the *anima rationalis*, has complete knowledge of both singulars and universals, particulars and intelligibles, because it is illuminated by a radiated light, the *irradiatio spiritualis*, or reflected light, the *lumen spiritualis*, and it is separated from the heavy, clouded body in sense perception, in the same way that the *anima rationalis* is separated from the body. As such, *intelligentia* is separated from the *phantasmata* of corporeal objects in the *imaginatio*, the lower function of *intellectus*, and from the corporeal functions created in the relation between the *virtus intellectiva* and the *phantasmata*: the objects of sense perception are to sense perception as sense perception is to intellect, as for Themistius. The corporeal function in mind is the *affectus mentis*, the state created by images of perception, *phantasmata*, as constructed in the *virtus cogitativa* or *virtus scitiva*, the functions of discursive reason. Sense perception supports the *anima rationalis*, but it is lower and separated from it, and is caused by it rather than being the cause of it, like the *phantasmata* in relation to the *imaginatio*, as for Themistius.

According to Grosseteste, the body corrupts the purity of the eye of the soul, the *oculus mentis*, making it cloudy and heavy. The *virtus* of the *anima rationalis* tends to be focused on bodily and material things, and such a focus tends to lull the *virtus* of the higher intelligences, the *virtus intellectiva*, to sleep, or to minimize the activity of the active intellect, restricting the incorporeal *virtus*, and restricting the ability of *intellectus* to engage the *virtus intellectiva* and aspire to or be open to the *intelligentia*; in other words, restricting the effect of the productive intellect on the material intellect, in relation to active intellect. The *virtus scitiva* and *virtus cogitativa* are more weighed down by the corporeal *species sensibilis* in the *phantasmata* of the *imaginatio*, and are limited in their abilities of intellection.

In the *De anima* of Themistius, the relation between the object of sense perception and sense perception is the same as the relation between sense perception and imagination in part because both require the imprinting of the *species*, the former being the *species sensibilis*, the latter being the *species apprehensibilis*, functioning as the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* of Freud, the representation of a representation. Themistius compared the *species apprehensibilis* to the print of a wax block on air, the wax block being the *phantasia*, “just as though the wax received the imprint of the seal right through itself, and after receiving the imprint and being enfolded in it had gone on to stamp the same imprint on the air” (*De anima* 92), the result being that “even though the wax and ring had gone away, the surrounding air had acquired a structure,” the intelligible structure. The enfolding of the *phantasia* in ma-

material intellect constitutes the process of actualization or entelechy of the material intellect to active intellect, in the perfection of the imagination through sense perception: imagination is “perfected by progressing to actuality through the agency of sense perception, just as sense perception is through the agency of the objects of perception.” Alexander of Aphrodisias described sensation, or sense perception, as that which “takes place by means of the apprehension of the forms of sensible objects without their matter,” which “must be conceived of as taking place in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet ring...” (Alexander’s *De anima* 83).

In the *De anima* of Themistius, to the extent that *phantasia* is composed in part of material intellect, the material intellect can be seen as the wax block or piece of wax which receives the imprint or *tupos* of the *phantasma* or *species* of the sensible object. The material or potential intellect “must therefore be, while impassible,” that is, unmoved by belief or assent, “capable of receiving the form of an object” (*De anima* 94). In order to receive the form of an object, the *species sensibilis*, the material intellect in sense perception “must be potentially identical in character with its object.” The material intellect must potentially perceive the *species apprehensibilis* in order to perceive the *species sensibilis*; it must potentially have an idea of the object in order to receive the form of the object in perception. In this way “thinking is analogous to perceiving,” and intellect is affected by the object of intellect, the *species apprehensibilis*, as perception is affected by the object of perception, the *species sensibilis*. In this way intellect is perfected, by “being advanced from potentiality to actuality,” through the mechanisms of sense perception.

In that material intellect is impassible or unchangeable, but experiences affection at the same time, it must “not have a structure of its own but be capable of receiving every form,” like the blank writing tablet described by Alexander of Aphrodisias in *De anima* 84, with a propensity to receive intelligible forms, or by Aristotle in *De anima* 3.4.429b30–430a10, with no characters written on it. Themistius distinguishes between the affection of the material intellect and the perfection of it. The material intellect is perfected as if it were letters “written on a tablet that has nothing actually written on it” (*De anima* 97). The potential intellect, as the tablet, is perfected without being affected, “since it has received that for which it came into existence,” but remains unchanged, because it is impassible, but must be capable of receiving the form of the object in sense perception. The potential intellect is perfected as actual intellect when it is “active towards the intellig-

ible objects,” and as such it must be “unmixed and uncompounded,” incorporeal. While the thought of the potential intellect cannot be identical to the object of the thought, because potential intellect “is actually none of the things that exist,” actual intellect comes into existence simultaneously with the thoughts which come into existence for potential intellect, like the letters written on the tablet with nothing written on it, thus actual intellect is identical with the object of thought. The potential intellect is not affected by the objects of thought, but rather becomes them, or identical to them as actual intellect.

The material intellect for Themistius cannot be identical to the objects that it thinks; it must remain potentially all things, which differentiates it from actual intellect, through the influence of productive intellect, which becomes identical to the objects that it thinks. The material intellect is “none of the objects that exist prior to its thinking” (*De anima* 94), and is thus not real or actual, but potential. Intellect as both material and actual can be compared to a line which is both bent and straight, one line in two different states. The actual intellect is as the straight line, uncompounded, while the material intellect is as the bent line, compounded and doubled, since it must contend with both matter and form. In the *De Lineis* of Robert Grosseteste, the treatise on lines, angles, and figures, a cosmology in which Grosseteste describes the formation of matter in geometrical terms, *virtus* or power proceeds from a natural agent along either a straight line or a bent line. The action of the *virtus* is greater along a straight line, as was established by Aristotle in Book V of the *Physics*, where a straight line is the shortest path between two points, and in Book V of the *Metaphysics*, where the straight line is more unified than the bent line.

Nature always takes the shorter of two possible paths, according to Grosseteste, because the *virtus* is greater. The evenness of the straight line is preferable to the unevenness of the bent line, because no angle is formed, according to Grosseteste, as was established by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*. If a line is bent in nature (as when light is refracted, for example), then it will have more than one *virtus*, because the *virtus* is complete along the straight line, and become compounded. The bent line occurs when either the receiving passive body is too dense to allow the passage of the *virtus*, and the line of action is reflected back, at an angle equal to the angle of incidence, or the receiving body is rarefied enough to allow the passage of the line of action, but alters its direction. These properties can be applied to both lines in matter and lines in perception, that is, to the *species sensibilis* and the *species ap-*

*prehensibilis*, and to the relation between material intellect and actual intellect, between the compound object of thought and the uncompounded object of thought, the intelligible.

Aristotle compared the activities of the intellect to a straight line and a bent line, according to Themistius. While Plato in the *Timaeus* compared the activities of the intellect to circular motion and rectilinear motion, in the contrast between the celestial spheres and the sublunary spheres, and between the intelligibles and discursive reason, in Aristotle the bent line corresponds to intellect when it becomes engaged in matter and becomes doubled, or embodied, in the manifestation of the *virtus intellectiva* as the *ratio* for Grosseteste, and the manifestation of the *species apprehensibilis* as the *species sensibilis*. When the intellect thinks about a compound, a material object, it becomes compounded, as a bent line, and when it thinks about a form or *species*, it becomes uncompounded, as a straight line, in the more complete *virtus intellectiva*, actual intellect.

The active intellect perfects the material intellect in the same way that a craft perfects matter in architecture or sculpture, according to Themistius. All things in nature consist of “a matter which is potentially all the particulars included” (*De anima* 98), the material substrate, including potential intellect, and “a cause which is productive in the sense that it makes them all,” the active intellect. The potential house and potential sculpture as material substrate receive their structure through the craft of architecture or sculpture, through the application of the *virtus* of the craft, and the imposition of the form of the craft on the material, as active intellect imposes the intelligible form, *species apprehensibilis*, on the sensible object, through the corporeal form, the *species sensibilis*, in the activation of potential intellect. In that way the house and sculpture are brought to completion as compounds, as potential intellect is brought to completion. The craft is in a state of perfection, like active intellect, and the house or statue are brought to a state of perfection through it. Active intellect “moves the potential intellect analogously to the craft...” The craft is separate and unaffected, like active intellect. The matter of the house or sculpture is unaffected and impassible, but is brought to perfection, like material intellect, through the craft.

In the *Enneads*, Plotinus asked, “On what principle does the architect, when he finds the house standing before him correspondent with his inner ideal of a house, pronounce it beautiful? Is it not that the house before him, the stone apart, is the inner idea stamped upon the mass of exterior matter, the indivisible exhibited in diversity?” (I.6.3), the intelligible in the sensible.

Plotinus likewise differentiated the matter from the form; it is the indivisible, incorporeal form, the intelligible, which defines the matter as architecture, in contrast to the diversity of particulars in matter in which the architecture may be perceived. Diverse parts in matter are gathered together and given shape by the Ideal Form for Plotinus, the incorporeal intelligible. Matter in itself is without shape or *species*, “But where the Ideal-Form has entered, it has grouped and coordinated what from a diversity of parts was to become a unity” (I.6.2). The medium by which the Ideal Form acts is the active intellect in the *anima rationalis*, which carries out the Ideal Principle, or the Intellectual Principle, and grasps and molds things.

In Plotinus, the *anima rationalis* is to the physical universe as the architect is to the house. The house is created by the *anima rationalis* of the architect as the universe is created by the World Soul, the *anima mundi*; Intellectual Principle descends into Reason Principle, as material intellect is activated by active intellect and discursive reason is able to understand intelligibles, and the beauty of the Good descends into physical form, from the mind of the architect to the house. The house, like the universe, is “ensouled; it has a soul which does not belong to it, it is mastered, not the master, possessed, not possessor. The universe lies in soul which bears it up, and nothing is without a share of soul” (*Enneads* IV.3.9). The house is a part of the architect, of the mind of the architect, but is separated from its source, as its matter is impassible. The architecture of the house is as the letters on the surface of the tablet on which no letters are actually written, as active intellect; the architecture of the house is an intelligible, and only exists in the mind of the architect or the mind of the viewer. The house is in the architect in the same way that the world is in the *anima rationalis*. The geometry and mathematics of the house, the vocabulary of the architecture, are a medium by which the mind of the architect, the *anima rationalis*, can be understood or intuited, as for Robert Grosseteste in *De lineis*, the geometry and mathematics of the architecture of the matter of the universe are a medium by which the *intelligentia* can be understood, as an active intellect which illuminates discursive reason or *virtus intellectiva* through the *lumen spiritualis* or *irradiatio spiritualis* of the Good.

In the Renaissance, Marsilio Ficino proposed, in *De amore*, “If anyone asked in what way the form of the body can be like the Form and Reason of the Soul and Mind,” that is, the *species sensibilis* can be like the *species apprehensibilis*, or the thought of actual intellect can be identical to the object of thought, “let him consider, I ask, the building of the architect” (*De amore*

V.5).<sup>4</sup> The architect “develops a Reason or Idea, as it were, of the building in his soul.” The architecture must pre-exist the matter, as the *species apprehensibilis* must pre-exist the *species sensibilis*, and active intellect must pre-exist potential intellect. “Then he builds, as nearly as possible, the kind of house he has conceived. Who will deny that the house is a body,” as a natural corporeal form, “and that it is very much like the architect’s incorporeal Idea, in the likeness of which it was built?” (V.5). A house is architecture in the same way that material substrate is form; an idea is projected onto it, and it corresponds to a preconceived idea, an *a priori* archetype or intelligible, in the mind of the perceiving or thinking subject. As Plotinus described, the artist, through the power of perception, “gathers into unity what still remains fragmentary, catches it up and carries it within, no longer a thing of parts, and presents it to the Ideal-Principle as something concordant and congenial” (*Enneads* I.6.3).

The relation between craft and matter is the same as the relation between productive intellect and potential intellect, as “the latter becomes all things, while the former produces all things” (*De anima* 99), according to Themistius. But productive intellect is not external to potential intellect in the way that craft is external to matter. Matter cannot become craft in the way that potential intellect can become productive intellect, or intellect in *habitus*. As actual intellect is added to potential intellect, a compound is created of form and matter, as well as creativity and matter, which both becomes all things and produces all things. Potential intellect has the capacity to be other than matter, while matter does not. The creativity, the capacity to produce all things in productive intellect, is the *dêmiourgia*, which involves the *virtus intellectiva* or power to become the objects which it thinks. The thinking of the productive intellect is as the craftsman, the demiurge, with the *virtus* through active intellect or *intelligentia* to comprehend, structure, and produce thoughts, as the *arkhêgos*, founder of thoughts.

Potential intellect is something (*to tode*), according to Themistius, as matter is something, while actual intellect is “what it is to be something” (*to tôide einai*, *De anima* 100), as the sensible object as *species* in the *anima rationalis* is what it is to be something. In the same way, the thinking subject as potential intellect is “I” (*to egô*), while the thinking subject as actual intellect is “what it is to be me” (*to emoi einai*). The thinking subject is the “intellect combined from the potential to the actual,” in becoming, in discursive thought, while “what it is to be me” comes from actual intellect, in producing, in intellection. The potential thinking subject and the actual thinking

subject are distinct. The actual thinking subject is the product of productive intellect, which is made possible by potential intellect, which is made possible by the imagination, which is made possible by perception. Perception, imagination, and potential intellect together can only allow for the potential thinking subject; productive intellect, as distinct from what makes it possible, alone allows for the actual thinking subject. Productive intellect alone is a “form of forms,” an incorporeal intelligible, while perception, imagination and potential intellect are tied to the corporeal and are only substrates, as matter is only a substrate for the form of a sensible object.

The thought of the material intellect, in discursive reason, is subject to time, while the thought of productive intellect, actual intellect given by active intellect, is not, as Themistius explains in *De anima* 101. In the *De anima* of Aristotle, “in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge” (3.5.430a), subject to time, but outside the individual potential intellect, there is no temporal relation between potential and actual intellect. Actual intellect is “mind set free from its present conditions...immortal and eternal,” incorporeal. Mind as passive, in its material potentiality, is destructible and subject to time, as in the ephemerality of the *phantasmata* of the *species sensibilis*, but mind as active is free from its material conditions; the *species apprehensibilis* is permanent and not subject to temporal duration. Discursive thinking is equivalent to thinking in time.

As Plotinus explained perception, “nothing will prevent a perception from being a mental image for that which is going to remember it,” in the temporal context of the *memoria* in the *imaginatio* or *phantasia*, “and the memory and the retention of the object from belonging to the image-making power” (*Enneads* IV.3.29), in the introduction of active intellect to potential intellect. Thus, for Plotinus, “it is in this that the perception arrives at its conclusion, and what was seen is present in this when the perception is no longer there,” the ephemeral *phantasma*. “If then the image of what is absent is already present in this, it is already remembering, even if the presence is only for a short time.” The introduction of active intellect to material intellect transforms the *species sensibilis* as subject to time to the *species apprehensibilis* as free from temporal and corporeal particulars.

In *Enneads* IV.3.30, “an image accompanies every intellectual act”: an atemporal *species apprehensibilis* accompanies an act of discursive reason, in the transformation from potential to productive intellect. The mechanism by which the mnemonic residue of the *phantasma* or picture of thought is incorporated into the conceptual, intellectual process, the image-making pow-

er, the *dêmiourgia* of active intellect, must be, according to Plotinus, language, the mechanism of discursive reason: “the reception into the image-making power would be of the verbal expression which accompanies the act of intelligence.” While the word belongs to discursive thought, it reveals as *logos* what lies hidden within, active intellect, beneath the conceptual processes which can be apprehended by discursive thought itself in material intellect. “The intellectual act is without parts and has not, so to speak, come out into the open, but remains unobserved within...” The intellectual act is without parts just as the sensible object in exterior reality is without parts once it has been processed in the imagination as *species sensibilis*. The progression from the multiple and fragmented in sensible objects, as given in potential intellect, to the whole and continuous as given in actual intellect, corresponds to the progression from the multiple and fragmented nature of potential intellect itself, subject to temporal and corporeal limitations, to the whole and continuous nature of actual intellect, free from the temporal and corporeal limitations.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant described time as “the subjective condition under which all our intuitions take place” (p. 30); the subjective condition can be seen as the potential intellect, the subjective “I” (*to egô*), defined as being prior to the objective, the thinking subject as actual intellect (*to emoi einai*), as becoming in the combination of potential and actual intellect, as that which determines the relations and representations of discursive reason. As time is the subjective condition of intuition for Kant, it is defined by intuition, “and in itself, independently of the mind or subject, is nothing” (p. 31). Time can only be seen as a construct of discursive reason, with no existence outside of discursive reason, as active intellect is free from time. If the thinking subject were not present as potential intellect, time would not exist. Time exists objectively as a mechanism to allow the thinking subject to perceive the world, but the world itself does not contain time, nor does the perceiving subject in actual intellect, in identity with the objects of thought.

In the *De anima*, Themistius wrote that when “supervening on potential sight and potential colors” (98), light “produces both actual sight and actual colors,” in the same way that “actual intellect advances the potential intellect” (99), and “constitutes its potential objects of thought as actual objects,” the sensible object as the *species sensibilis*. The actual object is the enmattered form, the universal derived from the particular, already constituted by the *species apprehensibilis*. Before it is illuminated by active intellect, po-

tential intellect is a “store-house of thoughts,” with no capacity to distinguish between enmattered forms, make transitions between thoughts, or combine or divide them, any of the functions of discursive reason. Potential intellect only “deposits the imprints from perception,” the *species sensibilis* or *tupos*, “and imagination through the agency of memory,” in the form of the trace or mnemonic residue. A *phantasma* comes to exist as a *tupos* or *aisthêma* in the *anima rationalis* in imagination, involving the faculty of discernment. When the potential intellect is encountered by the active intellect, as material objects are encountered by light, the potential intellect becomes the same as the active intellect, as the material object becomes the same as the form of it which is perceived. Light functions as the productive intellect, which allows the potential intellect to develop as intellect in *habitus*, as described by Alexander of Aphrodisias. As intellect in *habitus*, material intellect is able to make transitions and to combine and divide thoughts, and to understand the intelligible, the *species apprehensibilis*, which makes discursive reason possible, in its relation to sensible objects.

Potential intelligible thoughts are sense perceptions without the *virtus intellectiva*, in Grosseteste’s terms, which become mnemonic residues and are processed by the *phantasia*; they are illuminated by the active intellect, or the *irradiatio spiritualis* of Grosseteste, and are compared to potential colors. *Phantasia* is the primary image-making faculty, and preserves the impressions in sense perception, when it is illuminated by the active intellect or *virtus intellectiva*, and in turn illuminates the imprints of the sense perceptions as intelligibles, as light illuminates colors. It is through *phantasia* that the *phantasma*, or *species*, comes to exist in intellect as a *tupos*, imprint, or *morphê*, form, of the *aisthêma*, the sense impression (*De anima* 89). Themistius reminds the reader that the name for imagination, *phantasia*, derives its name from the name for light, *phôs*, as did Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *De anima* 73, referring to Aristotle in *De anima* 3.3.429a2–3.

According to Themistius, natural light comes from a single source, and through the “multiplication of species” of Grosseteste, becomes multiple in different perceiving subjects. The unity and simplicity of the *lux spiritualis*, the spiritual light of Grosseteste, becomes multiplicity and diversity in the *lumen*, as the unity of the intelligible, in active intellect, becomes multiple in the sensible, in potential intellect. As the unity of active intellect has no relation to the multiplicity of potential intellect in its corporeal attachment, “the imperishability of the light shared has no more relation to each organ of sight than does the eternity of the productive intellect to each of us...” (*De anima*

103). The active intellect is that which illuminates (*ellampôn*), as the *irradiatio spiritualis*, while potential intellect, being both passive and active, contains what is illuminated (*ellampomenoi*) and multiple particulars which illuminate (*ellampontes*), as agents of productive intellect. The unitary light of the sun, the *lux spiritualis*, becomes multiple as it is diffused and reflected in particulars as the *lumen spiritualis*, among both sensible objects and the particulars of discursive reason.

In the *Republic* of Plato, the light of the sun is analogous to the Good, the source of the Ideal Form, in Plotinus' terms, in *intelligentia*; the light of the sun is also the source of visibility in sense perception. The light of the Good is the idea which "gives the objects of knowledge their truth and the knower's mind the power of knowing..." (*Republic* 508). While the light of the sun "bears the same relation to sight and visible objects in the visible realm that the good bears to intelligence and intelligible objects in the intelligible realm," the light of the sun "is not itself sight, it is the cause of sight and is seen by the sight it causes." In that the Good is "the source not only of the intelligibility of the objects of knowledge, but also of their being and reality" (509), as active intellect, sensible objects cannot exist outside of active intellect, or the extent to which potential intellect can be participant of it, except as material substrate without form. The Good is "not itself that reality, but is beyond it": while potential intellect can be participant of active intellect, and affected by active intellect, it is separate from it, and can only be participant of it in time and particulars, subject to the temporal and corporeal conditions of the *anima rationalis*.

When intellect thinks an object in matter, the *species sensibilis*, intellect and object are distinct, according to Themistius (*De anima* 97), but when intellect thinks the immaterial object, the *species apprehensibilis*, as it has become an intelligible through the illumination of the *virtus intellectiva*, "what thinks and what is being thought are identical." The same would be said for vision: when the perceiver sees the enmattered object, perception and object are distinct, but when the perceiver sees the *species apprehensibilis* in the *oculus mentis*, the mind's eye, as again illuminated by the *virtus intellectiva* as an intelligible, what sees and what is seen are identical. As Plotinus says in *Enneads* I.6.9, "you are now become very vision," the perceiver becomes the perceived, when you understand "that only veritable light which is not measured by space," the light of the active intellect or *irradiatio spiritualis*, in the actualization of *nous* in vision, in the perception of the *species apprehensibilis*.

<sup>1</sup> Themistius, *On Aristotle's On the Soul*, trans. Robert B. Todd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *On the Six Days of Creation, A Translation of the Hexaëmeron*, trans. C. F. J. Martin (British Academy, Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, The Standard Edition*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. Sears Jayne (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985).