The Immateriality of the Human Mind, the Semantics of Analogy, and the Conceivability of God

Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics

Volume 1

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The Immateriality of the Human Mind, the Semantics of Analogy, and the Conceivability of God

Edited by

Gyula Klima and Alexander W. Hall

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CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

The Immateriality of the Human Mind, the Semantics of Analogy, and the Conceivability of God
Volume 1: Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics,
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This book first published 2011

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

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

ISBN (10): 1-4438-3362-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-3362-2

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INTRODUCTION*

ALEXANDER W. HALL

The *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* (PSMLM) collects original materials presented at sessions sponsored by the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics (SMLM). Founded by Gyula Klima (Director), Joshua Hochschild (Secretary), Jack Zupko and Jeffrey Brower in 2000 (joined in 2011 by Assistant Director, Alexander Hall) to recover the profound metaphysical insights of medieval thinkers for our own philosophical thought, the Society currently has over a hundred members on five continents. The Society's maiden publication appeared online in 2001 and the decade that followed saw the release of eight more volumes. In 2011, PSMLM transitioned to print. Sharp-eyed readers of these volumes will note the replacement of our (lamentably copyrighted for commercial use) lions, who guarded the integrity of the body of an intellectual tradition thought to be dead, with the phoenixes that mark our rebirth. Friends of the lions will be happy to note that they remain at their post, protecting PSMLM's online proceedings at http://faculty.fordham.edu/klima/SMLM/.

The essays in this volume consider the nature of God and the soul, what can be known of the divine essence and the semantics of theological discourse from the perspectives of medieval theology (both natural and revealed), logic and natural philosophy. In his capacity as an arts master commenting on a work of natural philosophy, Aristotle's *De Anima*, John Buridan discusses the immateriality of the intellect. Aquinas takes up the same issue, but in a more properly theological setting, in his Commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. Thomas de Vio Cajetan considers the semantics of theological discourse or 'God talk' in his *De Nominum*

* These writings first appeared in volume one of the *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* (http://faculty.fordham.edu/klima/SMLM/), the colophon of which appears as an appendix to this book.

Analogia; and Anselm of Canterbury's *Proslogion* seeks with unaided reason to develop a single proof whereby we may know that God exists.

Jack Zupko's *John Buridan on the Immateriality of the Human Intellect* discusses Buridan's defense of the position of the Church that the human intellect somehow inheres in the material human body (as material forms do, such as the body's shape or color), and yet is an immaterial form, against the competing, mutually exclusive views of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes. John Buridan composed his third and final version of his *Questiones* on Aristotle's *De Anima* after 1347, when he was an established figure at the University of Paris, having twice served as its Rector. In Question 6 of Book III, Buridan discusses the immortality of the human intellect. Taking a pedagogical tack, Buridan contrasts the materialism of Alexander of Aphrodisias with the strict immaterialism of Averroes (which denies the inherence of intellect in matter) to help students grasp what these stances entail. Though Buridan defends the consistency of the position of faith, his discussion is circumspect regarding the ability of reason to discern the truth or falsity of accounts that outstrip our abilities as empirical creatures.

Aquinas's Proofs of the Immateriality of the Intellect from the Universality of Human Thought by Gyula Klima turns to Aquinas's Aristotelian demonstration of the immateriality of the human intellect rendered in Aquinas's Commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. The proof argues that the being of the intellect is independent of matter on the grounds that the intellect has an operation that is independent of matter and whatever operates in such a manner does not depend on matter for its existence. Klima defends two of Aquinas's proofs for the premise that the intellect has an operation independent of matter, insofar as the universality (1) of the scope and (2) of the object of the operation of the intellect each entails this independence. Robert Pasnau's response (disputed in Klima's reply to Pasnau) contends that the arguments adduced in support of (1) and (2) are invalid and unsound, respectively.

Joshua Hochschild builds on the medieval tradition that conceives of categorial discourse as being concerned with things insofar as they are signified by our terms to show that extrinsic denomination (wherein one thing receives its denomination from a relation in which it stands to another or from that other thing itself) is a semantic property, i.e., a property which allows us to make a semantic (as opposed to a metaphysical) claim about things-as-signified in some way in *Logic or*

Metaphysics in Cajetan's Theory of Analogy: Can Extrinsic Denomination be a Semantic Property? By developing this point, Hochschild is able to contend that, for Cajetan, a term analogous by attribution always exhibits extrinsic denomination when predicated of its secondary analogates. This is a semantic claim, indifferent to the actual metaphysical state of affairs in which it is made. Hochschild's analysis challenges Ralph McInerny's criticism that Cajetan's doctrine of analogy relies on metaphysical considerations inappropriate to a logical analysis of analogical signification.

Lastly, Gyula Klima's *On whether id quo nihil maius cogitari potest is in the understanding* presents a simple, intuitive reconstruction of Anselm's argument for God's existence, allowing Klima to defend the soundness of Anselm's proof. Given that the proof is sound, Klima contends that its rational rejection is possible only for those who refuse to think seriously of anything as 'that than which nothing greater can be thought'.

JOHN BURIDAN ON THE IMMATERIALITY OF THE INTELLECT*

JACK ZUPKO

John Buridan (ca. 1295-1361) examines the question of the immateriality of the human soul in the sixth question of Book III of the third and final version of his *Quaestiones* on Aristotle's *De anima*.[1] The lectures on which this commentary is based were given fairly late in Buridan's long career as an Arts Master at the University of Paris. If a reference in Book III, Question 11 to certain condemned propositions associated with John of Mirecourt is not a later addition,[2] it must have been composed after 1347, when Buridan was already an established figure at the University and had twice served as its Rector. The designation "third and final lecture" comes from the text itself. There are two earlier versions: a *prima* or first *lectura*,

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* This paper is reprinted by permission of the publisher from "John Buridan on the Immateriality of the Intellect," in *Forming the Mind: Essays on the Internal Senses and the Mind/Body Problem from Avicenna to the Medical Enlightenment, Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind,* Vol. 5, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007): 129-47.

[1] *Ioannis Buridani Quaestiones in libros Aristotelis* 'De anima' *secundum tertiam sive ultimam lecturam*, lib. III, qu. 6. I have translated the entire text of this Question in the course of this essay. The edition was prepared from 6 of 19 known mss. of this work: *Oxford* BodlL canon. auct. class. lat. 278 ff. 2r-36r; *Oxford* BodlL canon. class. misc. 393 ff. 1r-75v; *Vaticana* Vat. lat. 2164 ff. 122r-234r; *Vaticana* Vat. lat. 11575 ff. 22r-87r; *Vaticana* Reg. lat. 1959 ff. 1r-69v; and *Wien* NB 5454 ff. 1r-59v. See my "John Buridan's Philosophy of Mind: An Edition and Translation of Book III of his 'Questions on Aristotle's *De anima*' (Third Redaction), with Commentary and Critical and Interpretative Essays," Ph. D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1989 (UMI #9001313) (hereafter '*QDA*$_3$', by page and line number). For the manuscript tradition, see Bernd Michael, *Johannes Buridan: Studien zu seinem Leben, seinen Werken und zu Rezeption seiner Theorien im Europa des späten Mittelalters*, 2 Teile, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Berlin, 1985: 693-731.

[2] *QDA*$_3$ III.11: 121-22, ll. 174-99.

which has been edited by Benoît Patar,[3] and a second or middle version, which is unedited and exists in some 15 manuscripts. Like a number of other later medieval arts masters, Buridan also wrote a literal commentary or *expositio* on *De anima*, which has also been edited by Patar.[4]

The relationship between these different *Quaestiones* is generally in the direction of increasing length and sophistication over time. Thus, the third and final version contains more questions (e.g., 20 in Book III, as opposed to 15 in the first and second versions) treated in more detail than in Buridan's earlier efforts. The third version is also less literal in the sense that it spends less time explicating and inventorying arguments from Aristotle and other authorities. For example, in his first version discussion of whether the human intellect is everlasting, he is content to give careful accounts of the arguments on each side, without taking a position on the question himself. "Our aim in this Question," he tells us, "is to provide some arguments and certain credible remarks [*persuasiones*] by which one can be persuaded that the intellect is everlasting. Then, in another question [*in alia quaestione*], we can study the diversity of opinion on this matter, viz., as regards the intellect being everlasting".[5] However, the "*alia quaestio*" is nowhere to be found in this text – unless, of course, it is a reference to a discussion in another, later work. If so, then the text I will be discussing here has an excellent claim to being that "*alia quaestio*".

In this Question, which occurs as Question 6 of Book III in the third version of his commentary, Buridan asks "concerning the nature of the human intellect … whether it is everlasting [*perpetuus*]". The word 'nature' is important because in this context it indicates that Buridan is primarily interested in what is evident to us through experience. Like most medieval commentators on Aristotle, Buridan conceives of psychology as that branch of physics whose proper subject is mobile, animate being. As we shall see, this does not mean that Buridan refuses to consider any arguments based on theological or more straightforwardly metaphysical premises, only that such arguments are cited to define the logical space in which the natural scientist must operate when addressing the question of the immortality of the intellect.

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[3] Benoît Patar, *Le Traité de l'âme de Jean Buridan [De prima lectura]*, Philosophes Médiévaux, Tome 29, Louvain-Longueuil (Québec):Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie-Éditions du Préambule, 1991.
[4] See Patar 1991.
[5] Patar 1991: 434.

QDA$_3$ III.3-6 together form a sub-treatise within Buridan's commentary on the nature of the human intellect: Q.3 asks whether the human intellect is the substantial form of the human body; Q.4 whether this form is inherent in the human body; Q.5 whether it is one in number for all human beings; and Q.6 whether it is everlasting. *QDA*$_3$ III.3-6 differ from other Questions in Book III in several respects. First, only Q.6, the concluding Question of the group, is based on a lemma from Aristotle's *De anima* (in this case, his well known remark about that part of the intellect which "alone is immortal and everlasting" at III.5.430a23). QQ.3-5 all stem from topics about which Aristotle says very little, but which are, on the other hand, given considerably more attention by authorities such as Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes. Second, *QDA*$_3$ III.3-6 revert to the expository format more typical of Buridan's earlier commentaries on *De anima*. Buridan makes a remark not very far into Q.3 that could apply to any of the Questions in that group, a remark we will see echoed in Q. 6: "This Question has been raised in order to sort out the different opinions about the intellect itself, so that we might see how they agree and disagree and might inquire later into their differences".[6] These Questions wear their pedagogical aim on their sleeves, as it were. Finally, "truths of the faith" actually play a role in the determination of these questions, whereas they are hardly ever mentioned in the rest of the commentary. Where the nature of the intellect is concerned, however, "the opinion of the faith" gets equal billing with the opinions of Alexander and Averroes as possible metaphysical worldviews, inviting the assent of the natural philosopher.

Question 6 begins with four negative arguments, which Buridan takes to represent the Alexandrian position.[7] The first is as follows:

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[6] *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 22, ll. 53-54.

[7] Buridan's use of Alexander to represent the position of natural reason here led Konstanty Michalski in a 1928 article ("L'Influence d'Averroès et d'Alexandre d'Aphrodisias dans la psychologie du XIV^{e} siècle," *Bulletin Internationale de l'Academie Polonaise des Sciences et Lettres, Classe de Philologie, Classe d'Histoire et de Philosophie*, pp. 14-16) to lump together Buridan and his followers at Paris as Alexandrists. But as Anneliese Maier pointed out in 1955: "one cannot really say that he [i.e., Buridan] decides in favor of the teaching of Alexander of Aphrodisias; throughout his arguments and conclusions, Buridan goes his own way, and then states only that his results agree with those of Alexander" (*Metaphysische Hintergründe*, Roma: Storia e Letteratura, 1955: 27). In the case of the immortality of the human intellect, however, Buridan is decidedly opposed to the position of Alexander, as we shall see.

> It is argued that it is not [N1], because it follows that human beings would be everlasting [*perpetuus*], which is false, since human beings are generated and will die. The consequence is obvious, because a composite substance is evidently only corrupted through the corruption of its substantial form, and the intellect is the substantial form of man; therefore, a man is corrupted only if his intellect is corrupted. This is highly confirmed if we assume only one substantial form in a man, viz., the intellective soul, for then a man would be nothing but a substantial composite of intellect and prime matter, which is everlasting. Thus, all parts of a man would be everlasting, and the parts of a man are the man, so the man would be everlasting. Whence it is argued by a similar exposition that the intellect of this man is A and his matter is B. Then it is argued that this A and this B are everlasting, but this A and this B are this man, since the parts belong to the whole, so the man is everlasting.

This argument (which I have labeled 'N1') attempts to saddle those who contend that the human intellect is everlasting with the consequence that this would make human beings everlasting – which is false, since obviously, "human beings are generated and will die". The argument invokes the Aristotelian principle that something is corrupted just in case its substantial form is corrupted, so that if the intellect is the substantial form of a human being (which was the main thesis of Q.3),[8] and never corrupted (the second thesis of Q.3),[9] no human being will ever be corrupted. This leads to a sub-argument which looks to be a rather obvious instance of the fallacy of composition: a human being is substantially or essentially composed of intellect and prime matter, both of which are everlasting; but since the essential parts of a human being are everlasting, and these parts belong to the whole, then the human being must also be everlasting. But this, of course, depends on the mistaken assumption that a substance is no more than the sum of its essential parts.[10]

The second and third negative arguments are standard *reductio* arguments against the hypothesis that human intellects are everlasting:

> Again [N2], it follows that human intellects would then be actually infinite, which is absurd [*inconveniens*]. The consequence is obvious via Aristotle's assumption that the world is eternal.[11] There have been

[8] *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 23, ll. 83-87.
[9] *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 23-5, ll. 88-143; cf. *QDA*$_3$ III.4: 33-4, ll. 121-144.
[10] See Arist., *Metaph.* VII-VIII
[11] Arist. *Phys.* VIII.1; cf. *Metaph.* IX.8; XII.6; *De caelo* I.3

> infinitely many human beings, each of which has had its own proper intellect, since it was said above [i.e., in Q.5] that the intellective soul is multiplied according to the number of human beings [*anima intellectiva multiplicatur ad multiplicationem hominum*]. Therefore, there have been infinitely many human intellects that still exist because they are supposed to be everlasting. Therefore, there are now actually infinitely many of them.
>
> Again [N3], it follows that the intellect would be superfluous [*otiosus*] after death, which is absurd, because nothing superfluous should be assumed in nature. The consequence is obvious because it would <then> be without an operation, since, as Aristotle says, it understands nothing without phantasms.[12] And there are no phantasms after death, since they require corporeal organs.

According to N2, Aristotle's argument for the eternity of the world forces us to accept an actual infinity of human intellects, since (1) intellects are multiplied in keeping with the number of human beings,[13] (2) "there have been infinitely many human beings",[14] and (3) the intellect is everlasting, so it can continue to exist even if the body in which it inheres is corrupted. Likewise, N3 attempts to show that an everlasting intellect would constitute an exception to universal teleology: since the intellect cannot operate without phantasms generated by a corporeal organ, it would be rendered inactive upon separation from the body, thereby fulfilling no purpose; but nature does not permit anything to exist without a purpose; therefore, the intellect cannot continue to exist once it is separated from the body. Buridan defends the principle of universal teleology later in Book III, at Q.19.

The fourth negative argument cites an authoritative remark apparently contrary to the hypothesis:

> Again [N4], Aristotle says in *De anima* III that the passive intellect is corruptible,[15] and this is the human intellect, since to understand is to be acted upon [*cum intelligere sit pati*]. Therefore, etc.

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[12] Arist. *De an*. III.7.431a16.
[13] A thesis argued for in *QDA*$_3$ III.5: 42-3, ll. 86-115.
[14] This is, of course, a consequence of the assumption of a beginningless world, if human beings (1) are creatures of *essentially* infinite duration, and (2) have always been here.
[15] Arist. *De an*. III.5.430a24-25.

The point seems quite straightforward, though Buridan will tell us how to read it later in the Question.

Following the *oppositum*, Buridan balances the case with four affirmative arguments:

> The opposite is argued by Aristotle when he says [A1] that the intellect is separated from other things just as the everlasting is from the corruptible,[16] and [A2] that it is immortal, everlasting, and impassible [*immortalis et perpetuus et impassibilis*].[17]
>
> Again [A3], if it remains after death, it must be concluded that it is everlasting. But it does remain after death because otherwise, Aristotle would ask pointlessly why we do not remember after death.[18]
>
> Again [A4], according to Aristotle everything generated has matter from whose potentiality it is derived [*habet materiam de cuius potentia educitur*].[19] But the intellect does not have matter in this way. Therefore, it is not generated, and everything ungenerated is incorruptible and consequently everlasting, as is obvious in *De caelo* I.[20] Therefore, etc.

The strategy of A1-4 is to show that by his various remarks on the subject, Aristotle is committed to the immortality of the human soul. For example, A3 contends that Aristotle's claim in *De an*. III.5 that once separated, the active intellect does not "remember its former activity", makes no sense unless it is assumed that at least part of the intellect is everlasting. And Aristotle never does anything pointlessly, of course! A4 looks back to arguments presented in Q.3 against Alexander's opinion that "the human intellect is a generable and corruptible material form, derived from a material potentiality, and materially extended."[21] According to A4, the intellect has matter, but not in the way suggested by Alexander. But if it is not generated from matter in the way that material forms are, it must be incorruptible and hence everlasting. It is important to notice that the immateriality question is always connected to the immortality question for

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[16] Arist. *De an*. II.2.413b26-27.
[17] Arist. *De an*. III.5.430a23.
[18] Cf. Arist. *De an*. III.5.430a22-25.
[19] Cf. Arist. *De caelo* I.11-12.
[20] Arist. *De caelo* I.12.281b26-27.
[21] *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 22, ll. 58-62. For the contrary arguments, see *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 23-5, ll. 92-43.

the natural philosopher. Death just means the corruption of the material essence of a thing, and so if a thing has no matter, it cannot die. Ironically, most medieval thinkers would probably agree with Epicurus's famous dictum, "Where death is, we are not", not because death is empirically beyond us, as Epicurus tried to argue, but because it is *metaphysically* alien to our nature. The necessity they would attach to this statement is accordingly much stronger.

Buridan opens his resolution of Q.6 by stating, incredibly, that:

> The resolution [*veritas*] of this question is apparent from what has already been said <i.e., in QQ. 3-5>, but it has been raised here so that everything might be reviewed together [*sed mota est ut omnia recolligantur simul*].

So, are we already supposed to know what to say about the immortality of the human intellect? Perhaps. But that is not the purpose of the Question. Buridan's aim is rather to teach by determining the logical import of the different possible positions on the nature of the intellect. Which theses are consistent with each position? Which are not? To students faced with an variety of claims from conflicting authorities about what sort of thing the soul is, this is important information. Ultimately, it will govern how they talk about the intellect as well as defining the parameters within which they will determine the question of its immortality.

CN1-7 are an attempt to connect the various conclusions about the nature of the soul arrived at by natural reason in QQ.3-5.

> First, I list the conclusions someone might reach if he used natural arguments alone without the catholic faith, via principles from species made evident by the nature of sense and intellect, without a special and supernatural revelation [*enumero primo conclusiones quas aliquis poneret si sine fide catholica solum rationibus naturalibus uteretur, per principia ex speciebus habentibus evidentiam per naturam sensus et intellectus, sine speciali et supernaturali revelatione*]. Some of these conclusions are categorical, others hypothetical.

It is the hypothetical conclusions that most interest Buridan, for their interrelationships can be logically determined. CN1, for example, mentions

Aristotle's argument in *De caelo* that the property of always having existed entails the property of always existing in the future:[22]

> The first [CN1] is that if the intellect were everlasting heretofore, it would be everlasting hereafter [*si intellectus esset perpetuus a parte ante, ipse esset perpetuus a parte post*], for Aristotle believed this to be proved in *De caelo* I.[23]

According to CN2, denying that the intellect is everlasting either heretofore or hereafter gives us the position of Alexander.[24] Similarly, CN3 shows that by contraposition of CN2, we get Averroist arguments for the immortality of the intellect.[25] CN4 concludes from CN2-3 that the properties of being everlasting (as interpreted by Averroes) and being inherent in matter (as interpreted by Alexander) are incompatible. The reason is clear: if its inherence were Alexandrian, the intellect would always be present in the body in precisely the way that some dimension or other is always present in a body,[26] but no one would want to say that like dimension, the human intellect remains after death and inheres "in the matter of the corpse or the earth".

The relationship between the positions of Alexander and Averroes is further specified in CN5, according to which (1) the six properties definitive of the soul for Alexander are consequences of one another; (2) the six properties definitive of the soul for Averroes are consequences of one another; and (3) each property associated with one position has its contradictory associated with the other.[27] Buridan seems to be saying that from the standpoint of natural reason, there are two equally possible but diametrically opposed ways of understanding the human intellect, viz., the materialism of Alexander, or the immaterialism of Averroes. A third contender, the position of the faith, is repeatedly described as something "natural reason does not dictate [*ratio naturalis non dictaret*]":

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[22] Arist. *De caelo* I.12.281b26-31. Notice, however, that on the sense in which the intellect is everlasting that Buridan comes to accept in TF1 below, it is false that the intellect has always existed.
[23] Arist. *De caelo* I.12.281b26-3.
[24] For which, see *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 22, ll. 58-62.
[25] Cf. *QDA*$_3$ III.5: 43, ll. 116-124.
[26] 'Extension' would work as well as 'dimension' here, of course, since as long as it exists, the body of Socrates is an extended thing.
[27] Cf. *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 22, ll. 58-73.

The second [CN2] is that if the intellect were not everlasting heretofore and hereafter, it would be generated, corruptible, derived from a material potentiality, materially extended, and multiplied according to the number of human beings [*ipse esset genitus et corruptibilis et eductus de potentia materiae et extensus extensione materiae et multiplicatus multiplicatione hominum*]. For if the intellect is not everlasting, it was made, and natural reason does not dictate – without faith or supernatural revelation – that anything has been made in the mode of creation [*per modum creationis*], but rather, that everything made in time is made in the mode of natural generation from a presupposed subject from whose potentiality <its> form is derived by an agent. Aristotle tries to prove this in *Physics* I and *Metaphysics* VII,[28] and natural reason dictates that everything we have spoken of accords with this kind of generation.

The third conclusion [CN3] is inferred from the second by moving from the opposite of the consequent to the opposite of the antecedent: i.e., if the intellect is not derived from a material potentiality, it is everlasting; and likewise, if it is not extended, it is everlasting; and if it is not multiplied, it is everlasting.

The fourth conclusion [CN4] – that if it is not derived from a material potentiality, it does not inhere in matter – is proved because if it were not <so> derived, it would be everlasting heretofore and hereafter, as is obvious from the previous conclusions. And natural reason would never dictate that an everlasting form inheres in matter unless it always inheres in the same thing, as some have claimed about indeterminate dimensions [*sicut aliqui posuerunt de dimensionibus indeterminatis*]. And natural reason would never dictate this about the human intellect because if the human intellect inheres in matter, this is nothing but the matter of a man, which remains after death in the corpse or the earth, and no one, would say then that the human intellect would inhere in the matter of the corpse or the earth.

The fifth conclusion [CN5]: these six are consequences of each other: the intellect's being everlasting, not being generated or corruptible, not being derived from a material potentiality, not inhering in matter, not being materially extended, and not being multiplied [*intellectum esse perpetuum, non esse genitum nec corruptibilem, non esse eductum de potentia materiae, non inhaerere materiae, non esse extensum extensione materiae, et non esse multiplicatum*]. And likewise, there are six opposed to these which are consequences of each other: i.e., not being everlasting, being generated or corruptible, being derived from a material potentiality,

[28] Arist. *Phys*. I.9.192a25-33; *Metaph*. VII.7.1032a15 ff.

> inhering in matter, being extended, and being multiplied. This entire conclusion is inferred [*infertur*] from what has already been said <i.e., in QQ. 3-5>.

Again, his point seems to be that the positions of Alexander and Averroes are on equal footing as antinomies of human reason.

CN6 is the only conclusion of the lot that is strictly categorical in form, as Buridan tells us himself:

> The sixth conclusion [CN6] is categorical: the human intellect inheres in the human body without matter. This was previously advanced and proved <i.e., in q. 4>.

But it is something of an overstatement to say that it was previously "advanced and proved" that the intellect inheres in the body without matter. In Q.3, Buridan conceded that there are no demonstrative arguments on behalf of the view that the human intellect is *not* a material form, even permitting Alexander a final response, without further rejoinder, to the arguments raised against him.[29] And Alexander's position itself appears, non-assertively of course, as the seventh conclusion of Q.6:

> A seventh conclusion [CN7] is inferred, which was the opinion of Alexander: the intellect is generable and corruptible, extended, derived, inherent, and multiplied.

To these seven conclusions based on natural reason [CN1-7], Buridan contrasts five representing the position of the faith [CF1-5], adding that the latter are not demonstrable from the natural order of things:

> Nevertheless, we must firmly uphold that not all of these conclusions are true, since they are against the catholic faith [*quia sunt contra fidem catholicam*]. I believe, however, that the opposite conclusions are not demonstrable without a special and supernatural revelation.

This places the natural philosopher in something of a bind, since the position he must firmly uphold on the nature of the intellect cannot be demonstrated via the principles and conclusions of natural science. Accordingly:

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[29] *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 26-7, ll. 152-183.

> The conclusions or propositions we must uphold in this matter according to the catholic faith must now be described without proofs [*narrandae sunt sine probationibus*], of which the first [CF1] is that the human intellect is not everlasting heretofore, although it is hereafter.
>
> The second conclusion [CF2] is that the intellect is not strictly generated by natural generation, but it is created; nor is it strictly corruptible by natural corruption, but it is annihilable. And yet, it will not be annihilated [*Et tamen non annihilibatur*].
>
> The third conclusion [CF3] is that the intellect is not derived from a material potentiality, nor extended.
> The fourth conclusion [CF4] is that it is multiplied according to the number of human beings.
>
> The fifth [CF5] is that it is inherent in the human body or matter as long as a man is alive, and is separable from the body and will return to it again.

According to CF1-5, then, the intellect is (1) everlasting hereafter but not heretofore;[30] (2) created and yet annihilable;[31] (3) neither derived from a material potentiality nor extended; (4) numerically many, in keeping with the number of human beings; and (5) inherent in the human body, and yet separable from it. In spite of the indemonstrability of these propositions, however, Buridan insists that any authoritative remarks (implicitly those of Alexander and Averroes) opposed to them must be rejected:

> And all the authorities opposed to these conclusions must always be denied, even though we cannot demonstrate their opposites.

How are we not to regard this as an indefensible piece of dogma? What is the force of the "must" here?

Fortunately, Buridan does not leave us hanging. But it does take some interpreting of the text to see why this does not amount to the complete abrogation of human reason on a question traditionally thought to be susceptible to its pronouncements. Buridan himself tells us what we should focus on as natural philosophers:

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[30] In other words, the everlastingness of the human intellect is right-handed.

[31] The annihilability of the intellect is a consequence of divine omnipotence: God has the power to snuff even an immortal entity out of existence, although as Buridan recognizes in TF2, he does not in fact do so.

> The most important thing to see, then, is how we respond to the arguments made at the beginning of the question insofar as they are seen to strive against the faith [*laborare contra fidem*].

What he proceeds to give the reader are suggestions about how to parse claims about the nature of the human soul in a way that is both consistent with the faith and scientific, insofar as it applies the semantic doctrines of the *Summulae de dialectica*, his masterwork on logic. These remarks are, in turn, based upon his more general account of the epistemic status of claims about the human soul vis-à-vis other things we claim to know in the natural order, although the details are not discussed in Q.6.

Among the arguments identified with Alexander made at the beginning of the question [N1-4], the most worrisome is N1, which Buridan sees as an argument about the proper signification of names. The threat here involves the very possibility of scientific discourse. If we cannot secure some proper or literal sense in which it is true to say that the human intellect is immortal, then there will be no way to connect the traditional discourse of psychology with what is true about the soul and hence, no science of psychology. The problem is that the proposition 'Man is everlasting' is false if the term 'man' refers to a composite of body plus intellect, since that term ceases to refer at death, the moment at which the composite ceases to exist. Buridan describes three different strategies for dealing with this problem [R1-3 ad N1].

First [R1 ad N1], if the terms 'man' or 'Socrates' are taken to refer only to a soul *and* a body, and to connote this soul and body as "wholly constituted", then a given human being will always exist, but he will not always be a human being:

> The first argument [ad N1] is on behalf of Alexander's position, but it difficult for us to resolve it. And so we say that the death of a horse is simply the corruption of the horse, but the death of a man is not simply the corruption of the man, but only the separation of one part of him from another. Therefore [R1 ad N1], some concede that this man, viz., Socrates, is everlasting hereafter in such a way that he will always be. But he will not always be a man or Socrates, because although the names 'man' and 'Socrates' supposit only for soul and body, they connote those parts as wholly constituted, i.e., as inherent in him. But they will not always be constituted in this way, and so although the man will always be, he will not always be a man [*quamvis ille homo semper erit, tamen non semper erit homo*]. Likewise, Socrates will always be, but he will not always be Socrates [*Sortes semper erit, sed non semper erit Sortes*]. In the same way,

> we say this of a horse or a stone, for God can separate the form of a horse or a stone from its matter, and conserve it separately [*separatim conservare*]. And so the stone or the horse would continue to be, but it would not be a horse or a stone.

We can express this difference by placing the subject term of the proposition either inside or outside the scope of the modal term '*semper* [always]', so *Socrates* will always exist, but it is not the case that *he* (i.e., the individual referred to by the subject term of the previous proposition) will always be Socrates. The connotation fails after his disembodiment at death and before his re-embodiment at the Last Judgment. This is likened to God's ability to separate form from matter, and to conserve one without the other, in which case "the stone or horse would continue to be, but it would not be a horse or stone".

In Q.4, Buridan reminds us that "the way in which the intellect inheres in the human body is not natural but supernatural. And it is certain that God could supernaturally not only form something not derived from a material potentiality, but also separate what has been so derived from its matter, conserve it separately, and place it in some other matter. Why, then, would this not be possible as regards the human intellect?".[32] For him, the non-commensurable inherence of the human intellect in its body is not a natural state of affairs, meaning that it cannot be explained by appealing to the same principles that govern the inherence of material forms. The immortality of the human intellect is understood in a similar fashion. Although the principles that make it true are not demonstrably evident to our intellects, they are consistent and they do at least stand in demonstrable relationships. Thus, in Q.3 he speaks of:[33]

> the truth of our faith, which we must firmly believe: viz., that the human intellect is the substantial form of a body inhering in the human body, but not derived from a material potentiality nor materially extended, and so not naturally produced or corrupted; and yet it is not absolutely everlasting, since it was created in time. Nevertheless, it is sempiternal hereafter [*sempiterna a parte post*] in such a way that it will never be corrupted or annihilated, although God could annihilate it by God's absolute power.

As an Arts Master lecturing on Aristotle's natural philosophy, Buridan saw himself as committed to naturalistic explanation, which for him

[32] *QDA*$_3$ III.4: 37, ll. 201-7.
[33] *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 22-3, ll. 74-82.

involves the construction of demonstrative or at least persuasive arguments based on evident premises. Where such arguments are lacking, he is inclined to indicate their absence and leave it at that, rather than to engage in *a priori* metaphysical speculation. He takes a similar approach to the question of the human soul's status as an immaterial form in Q.3:[34]

> Although this thesis [viz., that the human intellect is not a material form] is absolutely true, and must be firmly maintained by faith, and even though the arguments adduced for it are readily believable [*probabiles*], nevertheless, it is not apparent to me that they are demonstrative, [i.e., drawn] from principles having evidentness (leaving faith aside), unless God with a grace that is special and outside the usual course of nature could make it evident to us, just as he could make evident to anyone the article of the Trinity or Incarnation.

Buridan's point here is that since the immateriality of the human intellect is not evident to us, or apparent to our senses, he is in no position to construct arguments about it. Of course, God could make such truths evident to us directly, but in then our grasp of them would not be natural, but revealed.[35]

The second strategy *contra Alexandrum* is based on the idea that "the substantial form is the much more principal part of a composite substance":

> However [R2 ad N1], others say that the substantial form is the much more principal part of a composite substance [*forma substantialis est valde principalior pars substantiae compositae*]. Therefore, the name of the substance – e.g., 'man', 'animal', 'Socrates', etc. – is imposed to signify a composite substance. But it would be principally by reason of the form that the name is naturally suited to supposit [1] for the composite of that matter and form, for the time during which this form is in that unique matter, and [2] for the form alone, when this form is not in any unique matter (which is why we say, 'Saint Peter, pray for us', even though he is not composed of matter and form). And so it is conceded not only that Socrates or this man will always be, but also that he will always be Socrates and this man.

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[34] *QDA*$_3$ III.3: 25-6, ll. 144-51.

[35] Buridan elsewhere allows that there are theological arguments concerning the nature of the soul – e.g., that Christ "assumed a complete and entire humanity [*assumpsit sibi totam humanitatem et integram*] ", including a sensitive soul – but says that these produce a "great faith [*magnam fidem*]" in him, not knowledge (*QDA*$_3$ III.17: 192, ll. 82-9).

Things are denominated by their more principal parts. According to this reply, the substance-terms 'human being', 'animal', 'Socrates', etc., follow the substantial form such that they designate (1) the composite of matter and form when the form is embodied, and (2) the form alone when the form is not embodied. Thus, because the terms 'Socrates' or 'human being' continue to refer even after disembodiment, the propositions 'This is Socrates' or 'This is a human being' never cease to be true.[36] And Saint Peter could not justifiably turn a deaf ear to our prayers because we have used the wrong name in summoning his intercession.

The third response [R3 ad 1] combines the two previous strategies [R1-2 ad 1]:

> Still others say [R3 ad N1] that although a name is first and foremost imposed to signify a composite substance <R1>, nevertheless it is transferred to signify the form and to supposit for it on account of form's great pre-eminence over matter [*propter eius magnam principalitatem super materiam*]<R2>. That is why Aristotle seems to uphold this expressly in *Metaphysics* VIII, for he raises <precisely> such a doubt: "one must not fail to notice, however, that sometimes it is obscure whether a name signifies the composite substance, or the actuality or form".[37] And he replies, saying "but 'animal' will be [applied to] both [the composite and the actuality or form], not as something said by a single formula."[38] In that case, then, insofar as the name 'man' signifies the composite, this man will always will be, but he will not always be a man due to the connotation, as was stated. But insofar as it signifies the form, so [1] a man will always be; and [2] he will always be a man; and [3] he will never be corrupted.
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> Thus, (1) insofar as the term 'human being' is imposed to signify a composite of soul and body, the particular human so designated will always exist, but not always as a human being; and (2) insofar as 'human being' signifies the substantial form, the particular human so designated will always exist as a human being.

Although Buridan's application of the semantic notions of connotation and denomination by the more principal part enable us to speak of the human soul as such in a way that does not reduce to mere metaphor, he does not attempt here to refute Alexander's argument. But he does suggest where

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[36] For further discussion, see Chapter 10 of my *John Buridan: Portrait of a 14th-Century Arts Master*, forthcoming from University of Notre Dame Press.
[37] Arist. *Metaph*. VIII.3.1043a29-30.
[38] Arist. *Metaph*. VIII.3.1043a36.

one might find the appropriate discussion, i.e., in theological treatises, especially in replies to the question of whether Christ was a human being between his death and resurrection.

> Finally, let us say [R4 ad N1] that the determination of this doubt pertains to metaphysics or to the Faculty of Sacred Theology. Accordingly, several theologians have raised the following quodlibetal [question]: Whether Christ was a human being during the three days [*Utrum Christus in triduo erat homo*], i.e., when his body was in the sepulcher without a soul, and his soul was among the dead without a body.

As a career Arts Master, Buridan never wrote any theological works, and there is no discussion of whether the human intellect is everlasting in his influential commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. I believe this is for good reason. Since the truth of the proposition that the intellect is immortal is simply not evident to us by itself or demonstrable from evidently true premises, there is strictly speaking no *scientia* or knowledge about human immortality in this life – although theologians can speak about this from propositions whose truth we firmly accept on the basis of their revelation in scripture or Church teaching. In his *Metaphysics* commentary, Buridan glosses this distinction between metaphysics and theology as follows:[39]

> It should also be noted that [when we ask whether metaphysics is the same as wisdom,] we are not comparing metaphysics to theology, which proceeds from beliefs that are not known, because although these beliefs are not known *per se* and most evident, we hold without doubt that theology is the more principal discipline and that it is wisdom most properly speaking. In this question, however, we are merely asking about intellectual habits based on human reason, [i.e.,] those discovered by the process of reasoning, which are deduced from what is evident to us. For it

[39] *QM* I.2: 4ra-rb: "*Notandum est quod hic non comparamus metaphysicam ad theologiam, quae procedit ex ignotis creditis quamvis non per se notis nec evidentissimus, quia sine dubio illam theologiam tenemus principaliorem et maxime proprie dictam sapientiam. Sed non in proposito non quaerimus nisi de habitibus intellectualis ex humana ratione et processu ratiocinativo inventis et ex nobis evidentibus deductis. Sic enim Aristoteles metaphysicam vocat 'theologiam' et 'scientiam divinam'. Unde in hoc differt metaphysica a theologia, quod cum utraque consideret de deo et de divinis, metaphysica non consideret de deo et de divinis nisi ea quae possunt probari et ratione demonstrativa concludi seu induci. Theologia vero habet pro principiis articulos creditos absque evidentia et considerat ultra quamcumque ex huiusmodi articulis possunt deduci*".

> is in this sense that Aristotle calls metaphysics 'theology' and 'the divine science'. Accordingly, metaphysics differs from theology in the fact that although each considers God and those things that pertain to divinity, metaphysics only considers them as regards what can be proved and implied, or inductively inferred, by demonstrative reason. But theology has for its principles articles [of faith], which are believed quite apart from their evidentness, and further, considers whatever can be deduced from articles of this kind.

Using more recent terminology, we would say that Buridan thinks we can firmly believe that the human intellect is immortal and perhaps even be certain of it. But we could never *know* it.

After noting the convergence of his and Alexander's views on the finitude of human intellects:

> To the other argument [ad N2], Alexander would deny that intellects are everlasting, and by faith, we would deny that the world is everlasting heretofore and hereafter, and so in neither case does an infinity of intellects follow.

Buridan replies to the third negative argument at the beginning of Q.6. But his reply essentially concedes the point: true, the intellect is superfluous after death as far as the operation of cognition is concerned, since it would no longer have access to phantasms produced by the imagination. But, he argues, the disembodied intellect will not in fact be inactive, since it can understand without phantasms by divine intervention:

> To the other [ad N3], we say that after death, the human intellect understands without phantasms, which it can do by God's power and arrangement.

Likewise, Buridan indicates in his reply to N4 that he does not take the Aristotelian principle that the intellect understands nothing without phantasms to apply to disembodied thinking:

> To the final <negative> argument [ad N4], we say that by 'passive intellect', Aristotle means the imaginative or cogitative power, which is not absolutely corrupted because it is the same as the intellective soul. But it is corrupted in this sense: the corporeal dispositions by means of which it was naturally suited to exist as an act of cognizing or imagining are

> corrupted. Therefore, it can no longer exist as the sort of act without which Aristotle thought that the human intellect could not understand[40] – which we do not hold.

Although this is one of the very few claims Buridan makes about disembodied existence, it is not pursued here or elsewhere in QDA_3. Indeed, in Q.15 he says that the question of "how we sense, understand, or remember after death and without a body is not considered [something that] this Faculty [i.e. the Faculty of Arts] decides upon".[41] I suspect he thought that no one else decides upon it either – or at least no one else in at the University, including professors in the Faculty of Theology.

Q.6 ends with the suggestion that a sufficiently motivated student should be able to see from these replies how to respond to the seven naturalistic conclusions about the nature of the intellect [CN1-7], described after the *oppositum*:

> The <negative> arguments after the statement of the opposing position [CN1-7] are resolved or denied in keeping with the constraints of what has been said above, etc.

This is very much in keeping with Buridan's idea that he is teaching his students the art of dialectical inquiry.

What is going on in Q.6? In my view, Buridan treats propositions about the metaphysical nature of the human intellect as boundary propositions. They are true, but their demonstration assumes that we assent to principles whose truth is simply not evident to us as empirical creatures.[42] Hence, they constitute a limit of inquiry in philosophical psychology, beyond which we cease to do philosophy and instead engage in pointless and all too often presumptuous speculation. Is this what the theologians are

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[40] Arist. *De an*. III.7.431a14-16; III.8.432a6-8

[41] QDA_3 III.15: 173, ll. 327-329.

[42] Interestingly enough, the human intellect shares many properties with demonstration in the strict sense: "it is common to every demonstration in the strict sense that it has a conclusion that is necessary, cannot be otherwise, is ingenerable, is incorruptible, is perpetual and is per se, and that it is from premises of this sort, or made up of common terms: (*Summulae* 8.11.2 in Gyula Klima (tr.), *John Buridan: 'Summulae de dialectica'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001): 792). Could this be because both play limiting or criteriological roles in their respective spheres of metaphysics and logic?

engaged in? Not at all. If we are clear that we are no longer doing philosophy when we reason about the ultimate nature of the soul, as opposed, say, to specifying its powers and activities, there will be no danger of this.

Buridan acknowledges the evidential shortcomings of his account, but is quick to point out that his Alexandrian and Averroist competitors are no better off in that respect. What little evidence we do have is insufficient to establish *philosophically* any truths about how human souls are related to human bodies. His own convictions are hardly agnostic, of course. As he states in the *Summulae*: "on the basis of our faith we posit some special forms to be separable from their subjects without their corruption, as in the case of the intellective human soul, which is not educed from the potentiality of its matter, or its subject".[43] But he is not about to let the strength of his convictions confuse him about what he knows to be true on other grounds.

Buridan's other writings reveal a confidence both in our natural ability to assent to what is true and in our cognitive powers as reliable producers of evident appearances.[44] This means that more often than not, if there is a problem in natural philosophy, it is because something has been spoken about in the wrong way. Buridan's famous remark in the debate over the nature of scientific knowledge – "I believe that such great controversy has arisen among the disputants because of a lack of logic [*ex defectu logicae*]"[45] – follows directly from this conception of the task of philosophy. The philosopher cannot answer all of the questions we might have about nature and the place of human beings in it. Some, such as, 'Is the number of the stars even?', have answers that are simply not evident or such as to produce in us a proposition that looks good enough to command

[43] *Summulae* 6.4.12 in Klima (tr.): 446

[44] See, e.g., *In Metaphysicen Aristotelis Questiones argutissimae*, Paris: 1588 (actually 1518); rpr. 1964 as *Kommentar zur Aristotelischen Metaphysik*, Frankfurt a. M., Minerva, I.5: 6ra and VI.17: 52va; *Subtilissimae Quaestiones super octo Physicorum libros Aristotelis*, Paris: 1509; rpr. 1964 as *Kommentar zur Aristotelischen Physik*, Frankfurt a. M., Minerva, I.15: 18vb-19ra; and Ria van der Lecq (ed.), *Johannes Buridanus, Questiones longe super librum Perihermeneias* (Nijmegen: Ingenium, 1983), II.11: 100.

[45] Johannes Buridanus, *Quaestiones super decem libros Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum*, Paris: 1513; rpr. 1968, as *Super decem libros Ethicorum*, Frankfurt a. M., Minerva, VI.6: 122vb.

our assent. Others, such as, 'How do we sense, understand, or remember after death and without a body?', have evident arguments that can be marshaled on their behalf, but also appearances to the contrary, which, when taken together, prevent the conscientious philosopher from giving a definitive answer. Some of the questions generating mixed judgments can be resolved with the aid of another method of inquiry, e.g., by invoking articles of faith. But again, Buridan is very clear that when we do this we are no longer doing philosophy. Theology works from principles accepted because they are part of the doctrine of the faith and not because they are evident.

Of the remaining questions, many require only a perspicuous representation in our intellect. This is much harder than it appears, however, because our speaking and thinking are structured by language, and the expressive power of human conventional language will always fall short of its object, created being, which is the language spoken by God. Medieval thinkers understood this distinction as having a scriptural basis. Had Buridan turned his hand to theology, he would have surely admired the gloss on the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus with which Duns Scotus begins his *Quodlibetal Questions*: "'All things are difficult,' says Solomon, and immediately adds the reason why he thinks they are difficult: 'Because man's language is inadequate to explain them' [Eccl. 1:8]".[46]

[46] See Felix Alluntis and Allan B. Wolter (tr.), *John Duns Scotus, God and Creatures: The Quodlibetal Questions* (Princeton, NJ-London Princeton University Press, 1975), Prologue: 3.