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GUIDO CAVALCANTI

POET OF THE RATIONAL ANIMAL

Gregory B. Stone

Guido Cavalcanti

Guido Cavalcanti, Dante's intellectual mentor, is widely considered among the greatest Italian lyric poets; his famous and notoriously difficult philosophical canzone *Donna me prega* is often characterized as the most studied lyric poem in Italian literature. This book situates Cavalcanti's poetry in the context of the Arabic Aristotelian rationalism that entered the Latin West in the 12th century—a tradition marked by questions concerning whether humans can ever transcend their animality. Cavalcanti's poetry is a focal point where one can view, circa AD 1300, Arabo-Islamic philosophy in the process of being assimilated and naturalized in Western Europe, eventually leading to values (associated with the Renaissance and the Enlightenment) that we now call modern and secular—in particular, to a notion of human reason as bound up with imagination and with ethical *praxis* rather than as a means for the attainment of knowledge concerning God and the cosmos. The book features a radically unprecedented interpretation of *Donna me prega*, starkly opposed to all previous accounts: far from treating love as a threat to reason that would best be eliminated, the canzone praises loving as the essential operation of rational human flourishing. This study of Cavalcanti serves as a prelude to the formulation of a new paradigm for understanding Dante's *Comedy*.

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Abbreviations

DA	Aristotle. *De anima*.
DeR	Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, ed. Domenico De Robertis.
LC	Averroes. *Long Commentary on the "De Anima" of Aristotle*, trans. Richard C. Taylor.
R/I	Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, ed. Roberto Rea and Giorgio Inglese.

Introduction

This book is the first volume of a two-volume study of Dante Alighieri and Guido Cavalcanti, whom Dante regarded, during his formative years as a poet and philosopher, as his mentor and best friend. Cavalcanti is widely considered one of the greatest Italian lyric poets; his famous and notoriously difficult philosophical canzone *Donna me prega* is often characterized as the most studied lyric poem in Italian literature.[1] This volume and its sequel (*Dante and the Salvation of Intellect*) situate Dante's and Cavalcanti's poetry in the philosophical context of their age and, more specifically, in the context of the Arabic Aristotelian rationalism that entered the Latin West in the twelfth century—a tradition marked by questions concerning whether humans can ever transcend their animality (i.e., mortality). Their poetry is treated as a focal point where one can view, circa AD 1300, Arabo-Islamic rationalist philosophy in the process of being assimilated and naturalized in Western Europe, eventually leading to values and mentalities (associated with the Renaissance and the Enlightenment) that we now call modern and secular—in particular, to a notion of human reason as bound up with ethical *praxis* rather than as a means for the attainment of knowledge concerning God and the cosmos.

Our understanding of Dante's relation to his mentor is crucial since it determines the horizon of expectations that we bring to bear in approaching *Comedy*. In the past three decades, examination of the Cavalcanti-Dante question has flourished, becoming a dynamic subgenre of Dante studies, with a dozen or more books and many shorter works devoted to the subject. This relation is virtually always represented as antagonistic: Dante is thought to have reached a point where, no longer able to follow in Guido's path, he turns against his now former *primo amico* ("best friend"—the phrase that Dante had used to describe Cavalcanti in *Vita nuova*). The standard view involves positing some variation of a theological Dante versus a philosophical Cavalcanti: an opposition between unbridled reason (Cavalcanti) and reason tempered by faith (Dante), between Averroist heresy (Cavalcanti) and Thomist orthodoxy (Dante), between a negative physical view of love as an irresistible force that destroys the rational soul (Cavalcanti) and a positive spiritual

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view of love as that soul's guide on its itinerary toward transcendence (Dante). While not denying significant tensions and differences, we will come to see the relation between the two poets in a new light. Dante's response to the challenge posed by Cavalcanti is not the definitive rejection of his thinking but rather its expansive development (especially as an engagement with questions involving society, politics, and religion not directly addressed by Guido), and we will see that Dante's thinking is hardly less heterodox than is Cavalcanti's. Reading Dante as a Radical Aristotelian will open a clearing for new insights into the fundamental design as well as innumerable elements and episodes of *Comedy*—insights to which one remains blind unless one assumes the tradition of Arabo-Islamic rationalism, the "religion of the philosophers," as a primary premise for interpretation.

Volume One, *Guido Cavalcanti: Poet of the Rational Animal*, shows that Cavalcanti's poetry revolves around principal themes of Arabic rationalist psychology and metaphysics. The fundamental theme is the distinction between the human rational soul and divine, immortal Intellect. Soul is, by definition, the form that animates a body; when the body perishes, so does the soul, and thus the notion of an immortal soul is a nonstarter. If there is an immortal element of a human being, it can only be intellect, since intellect is in no way physical or material and thus is incorruptible. By nature all humans are born with potential not actual intellect; we are not born immortal but rather with a potential to attain immortality. For a human to become Intellect[2] (a metaphysical entity) is to become other and higher than human, a transhuman (a word coined by Dante in *Paradiso*). The highest attainment of a human's life is to make one's intellect actual, thus becoming in some sense a divine rather than natural being. According to the *falasifa* (the Arabic rationalist philosophers), the event of one's potential intellect becoming actual Intellect—an event termed the Conjunction with the Active Intellect—is what religious scriptures and traditions refer to using metaphorical and symbolic terms such as "the afterlife," "the world to come," "eternal bliss," "reward in heaven," "Paradise," and "salvation." The highest happiness, the ultimate perfection, of humans as divine beings is an event of *theoria* (viewing, contemplation, s*peculatio*)—knowing the essences and causes of divine, metaphysical entities.

Although the Arabic rationalist philosophers maintain the divinization, through metaphysical knowledge, of the naturally mortal human being as an ideal aim, they also often cast a substantial degree of doubt upon the possibility of such divinization. While on the one hand advising would-be philosophers to strive to become pure Intellect, the major *falasifa* frequently recognize that the divine life of *nous* (*intellectus*) is indeed, as Aristotle says, "too high for man." As we shall see, such skepticism is at the very heart of Cavalcanti's philosophical-poetic project. Guido's lyric persona, striving for metaphysical intellection, longs for

such a Conjunction but is also convinced of its impossibility—hence the tragic pessimism that pervades his poetry.

Cavalcanti's famous philosophical manifesto *Donna me prega* ("the most talked about Italian canzone of all time"[3]) presents the other side of the coin—an optimistic and positive account of love as part and parcel of the highest faculty of the rational soul. This claim will be controversial, to say the least. For while the poem's extremely opaque, dense, and technical discourse has led to uncertainty concerning almost every detail and turn of phrase, there is virtually unanimous agreement among commentators that its fundamental message is perfectly clear: that love is irrational. We will come to see, however, that for Cavalcanti (no less so than for Dante, who in the very center of *Comedy* teaches that love is the rational foundation of ethics) loving is the very operation of the noblest human power, the essence of the human species as the rational animal. With *Donna me prega*, Guido asserts that, although humans have no power of *intellectus* (theoretical intellection), they do—as their specific essential form—have the power of *ratio* (practical reason). Although we are animals, not gods (we have a beginning and an end, a life and a death), we are the only animals endowed with the power to make ethical choices. Making such choices, the activity of practical reason, is inseparable from loving and is our perfection, the highest human happiness—the rational life of *praxis*. We will see that *Donna me prega* celebrates loving as the full extent of our flourishing and the best for which we can hope. This reading of Cavalcanti's canzone is unprecedented and starkly opposed to all previous interpretations, which reduce the poem's lessons to a conventional admonition against the dangers posed by love to the proper operation of reason, ascribing to Cavalcanti the commonplace notion that love and reason stand in opposition as two mutually exclusive, conflicting powers. But far from treating love as a threat to reason that would best be eliminated, *Donna me prega* spotlights love as an exemplary instance of rationality, as an emotion that discloses the essence of that power of reason that defines human beings *qua* human, setting them apart from the other animals.

Part One ("The Intelligence of Love: On the Sweet New Style") establishes the premises for the philosophical approach to reading Cavalcanti's poetry. While no one denies that Guido is philosophizing in *Donna me prega*, some suggest that the famous canzone is unique in this regard, an exclusive instance and perhaps the sole real basis for Guido's posthumous reputation as a philosopher.[4] Even those Cavalcanti scholars who are most attuned to his thinking sometimes reduce his philosophizing to a means (a way to talk about his love) rather than an end. Often Guido is still viewed as a poet who at times draws on philosophy to talk about love. In truth, he is a philosopher-poet who draws on the language of love poetry to do philosophy. This inversion, according to which talking about love is the means and philosophy is the end, is precisely what is,

in its literary historical context (namely, the Romance vernacular love lyric tradition), *new* in the poetic project of those who practiced what Dante, in *Purgatory*, would name the Sweet New Style. This claim regarding the essence of that "style" is itself nothing new, but it is at times set aside in favor of promoting tangential elements of the new poetry. Dante and Cavalcanti belong to a circle of poets who consciously set themselves apart from their predecessors in Italian and Occitan verse by writing love lyric that is not just occasionally adorned with but essentially *is* philosophical discourse. Although modern scholarly consensus regards the meaning of *Purgatory*'s formulation of the *dolce stil novo* as a perhaps insoluble mystery, our discussion of several related texts (Dante's *Convivio*, *De vulgari eloquentia*, and *Vita nuova*; a *tenzone* [debate in sonnets] between Bonagiunta da Lucca and Guido Guinizelli; Guinizelli's epoch-making canzone *Al cor gentil*) will confirm that what Dante means by a new poetics is not at all opaque but rather transparent. As it turns out (and as has long been recognized but often forgotten), the Sweet New Style is not really a matter of style but rather of content: it is love lyric that cloaks a coherent meaning, derived from the poet's advanced university-style studies, that can be formulated by the poet as prose philosophy. According to Dante, what distinguishes the *stilnovisti* from their predecessors (who compose in a "foolish manner") is that the former write philosophical poetry while the latter do not. In this conception, poetry is not a vehicle for self-expression or a means to accomplish any sort of aim. The poet does not try to do anything whatsoever, other than to declare in verse, for an elite audience of peers (and so perhaps to teach), those physical and metaphysical truths that he has learned from loving (i.e., from studying) and that he loves for their own sake. In the course of investigating this new philosophical poetics, we will see that the philosophy Dante has in mind revolves around primary themes of Arabo-Islamic psychology and metaphysics—in particular, around the notion of love as the union between the human rational soul and the Active Intellect.

Part Two ("The Figure of Cavalcanti: Intimations of Heterodoxy") opens by surveying Cavalcanti's reputation, in his own time and in the several decades following his death, as the exemplary figure of the heterodox intellectual, as a so-called atheist and Aristotelian materialist for whom the Christian afterlife is nothing more than a useful fiction. Turning to a set of poems in which Guido, through addressing or corresponding with other poets (namely, Guittone d'Arezzo and Guido Orlandi), fashions his own figure, we will see that he does consciously aim to establish himself as a leader of the Aristotelian left wing,[5] as an unabashed culture warrior who does not shrink from deriding poets who are not intellectuals and from mocking learned authors who settle for traditional opinion rather than science. Along the way, we will see that Cavalcanti's grasp of Aristotle is firm, deep, and a constant source

of poetic inspiration. Through close readings of several poems, we will begin to recognize the extent to which Cavalcanti is intent on insisting that human thinking is driven by imagination, not by intellection.

Part Three ("The Salvation of Intellect in Arabic Aristotelian Philosophy") is an exposition of philosophical views and vocabulary requisite for the interpretation of Cavalcanti's project presented in Parts Four and Five. Specifically, we will focus on the philosopher's version of salvation in the afterlife, the Conjunction with the Active Intellect, as variously treated by the three most important classical Islamic rationalist philosophers, al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes.[6] The constellation of ideas that I call the Salvation of Intellect functions, within the religion of the philosophers, as that religion's all-important eschatological doctrine. Here (and even more so in *Dante and the Salvation of Intellect*) we will see that it would have been impossible for well-informed avant-garde European intellectuals in the age of Dante to ignore or brush aside a philosophical worldview that in effect calls into question many of the most basic tenets of the Christian faith. These philosophers teach that the Active Intellect is a "separate" (i.e., entirely nonmaterial) superlunary substance and that there is only one Active Intellect in the universe; it is the lowest (closest to the realm of nature or materiality) in a hierarchy of cosmic nonmaterial Intelligences that emanate from the First Cause (i.e., God). Humans are born with the potential for intellection; some time just after their birth the Active Intellect acts upon them by endowing them with first principles (basic premises intuitively known as true, such as "the whole is greater than the part"). Through putting these first principles to use as instruments for laboring through a philosophical curriculum in physics, humans can attain actual intellection of the intelligible forms (essences [definitions] and causes [reasons for] of natural entities). When humans attain actual intellection of the intelligible forms of all or most of the natural entities, they themselves become Intellects and attain or nearly attain the same ontological rank as the Active Intellect. This is for humans the highest happiness, ultimate felicity, perfection—what is referred to in religions as heaven, salvation, the blessed afterlife. There is a difference between humans *qua* human and humans as Intellects; this is either, according to some accounts, the difference between being imperfectly (incompletely) human and being perfectly (completely) human, or, according to others, the difference between two distinct species of being, with individuals of the ontologically lower species potentially able to transform themselves into individuals of the ontologically higher one. This is also the difference between being mortal and being immortal. The essential activity of humans *qua* human is ethical *praxis*. The essential activity of humans *qua* intellect (*qua* superhuman) is metaphysical *theoria*. This highest happiness or ultimate felicity is reserved for metaphysicians only—those who through completing a full philosophical curriculum in physics have gained knowledge of the metaphysical

reality of the cosmos. In some accounts, such metaphysical knowledge is unattainable and immortality for humans is "an old wives' tale." Yet, following the imperative laid down by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, the philosopher must nonetheless "strain every nerve" to reach what may well be unreachable.

Part Four ("Who Could Think Beyond Nature? Allegories of Intellection") amounts to a dossier of evidence challenging any notion that there is a discontinuity between *Donna me prega* and Cavalcanti's love poems, a discrepancy—whether of philosophical themes or intensity of philosophical commitment—between the famous treatise-poem, on the one hand, and Guido's enigmatic, bewitching, and bewildering lyric gems, on the other. We will see that Cavalcanti's scientific manifesto and his beautiful love poetry are part of a single coherent project of thinking; insofar as there are differences, these involve the fact that the same set of notions is approached from different angles (for instance, in the case of the love poetry, we are listening to the performance of a dramatic persona enacting what is true, while in the treatise we are being taught by a magisterial authority telling us what is true) and the fact that *Donna me prega*'s meaning is virtually entirely literal, while in the love poems Guido uses figural language that points to latent philosophical meaning. These poems, haunted by the prospect of the lover's death, give poetic expression to the Averroist distinction between human thinking, which is an operation of the rational animal's imaginative power of soul, and the eternal locus of metaphysical truth, which remains always above and beyond the rational animal's reach.

Part Five ("Long Commentary on *Donna me prega*") is a detailed verse-by-verse commentary on *Donna me prega*, one of the outstanding monuments of Italian literature (Marco Berisso: "a canzone such as this had never been written before Cavalcanti and would not be again until a long time after, perhaps not until Leopardi [in the 19th century]"[7]) and among the most notoriously difficult (and most thoroughly misinterpreted) texts in the Western canon. Despite the poem's iconic status, it has proven to be nearly impossible to understand—a fact that makes attempting to do so a fascinating challenge. Even merely determining the text's literal meaning is tremendously difficult; there are decisions to be made at every turn, and one is never truly confident that one has made the right ones. Just 75 verses in length, the poem's extremely compact, technical, and elitist discourse conveys what is, when properly expounded, an expansive philosophical treatise concerned with nothing less than the essence and aim of the human species. Impossible to understand without intense and prolonged study—and even then still provoking plenty of fundamental doubts—*Donna me prega* poses a daunting challenge to would-be commentators.

I call this a Long Commentary not merely because it is in fact, in proportion to the poem, long, but also as a tribute to one of Guido's masters,

the great Arabic philosopher Averroes (whom Dante identifies in *Comedy* as he "who made the Great [i.e., Long] Commentary"). Averroes typically wrote three kinds of commentaries on Aristotle's works—Short, Middle, and Long. The distinguishing feature of a Long Commentary is that it is a complete commentary, in the sense that it contains the entirety of the text being commented on, divided into relatively small sections which are glossed in sequence, one after another. Although modern scholarship has produced a certain number of extended commentaries on *Donna me prega*, there is nothing approaching a Long Commentary in this sense,[8] and even the best modern treatments are marred by errors and do not grasp the coherence and essence of Cavalcanti's thinking.

Donna me prega is such a difficult poem that few of its phrases or details have yielded critical consensus. Still, almost all commentators agree that Cavalcanti casts love in a negative light. Assuming that the poem amounts to an attack against love, they usually attribute to the canzone one or both of the following tenets: love ought to be avoided because it interferes with our reason, that is, with our power to make free and proper ethical choices; love ought to be avoided because it impedes our intellect, that is, our power to attain scientific knowledge of objects of theory. Underlying this prevailing interpretation is the view that Cavalcanti denigrates love as an "animal power," a subhuman force that destroys our properly human rational operations; teaching that the rational animal can be rational only by restraining or repressing love, Cavalcanti "openly opposes love to rational virtue."[9] Yet the canzone has little to do with this assertion concerning the relation of emotion and reason. Cavalcanti does not regard love as blocking reason but rather as in effect the very operation of reasoning: the rational choice that results from thinking is guided by loving. Love cannot be blamed for blocking our intellection, because for us there is never any intellection, period. Cavalcanti's negativity or pessimism concerns not love but the fact that many or most human beings seem not to love and therefore do not make actual their potential rationality, their potential for thinking, loving, and hating. It is precisely to the extent that humans do not love (that is, do not freely choose the most delightful from among a set of imagined desires) that they fail to lead human lives.

In the middle of this Long Commentary, I will uncover, in Averroes's Long Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, a theory of love as rational choice. In Averroes there is a very precise analysis of love, part of a discussion concerning what it means to define the essence of the human species as rational animal. In distinguishing the properly human mode of desire, Averroes develops a conception of emotion ("loving and hating") and reason ("thinking") as two aspects of the same uniquely human power, according to which it makes perfect sense to speak of the emotionality of reason and the rationality of emotion. This fusion of emotion and reason helps us see that Cavalcanti, normally considered

a poet of tragic emotional disorder, can rightly be called the poet of the rational emotional animal. The rationality that grounds our practical choices—the opinion or belief that we should do one thing and not another—is not knowledge of the way things are but a preference for what is most desirable. Positing this theory as the guiding principle for reading Cavalcanti's canzone leads to the recognition of its remarkable coherence and the formulation of an unprecedented interpretation: the poem does not blame love for its irrationality (as virtually all previous commentators have claimed) but praises love as paradigmatic of rational human flourishing. At the same time, *Donna me prega* celebrates love as a noble striving for transcendence or divinization, albeit one that is doomed to failure by the ineluctable ontological order of the cosmos. For Dante (as we will see in Volume Two), the appropriate response to this impossibility is a disenchanted reorientation of the path to human happiness, a redirection of human aspiration toward ethical *praxis* and away from metaphysical *theoria*. In short, we witness in *Donna me prega*—a poem saturated with the teachings of the great Arabo-Islamic rationalists—one of the inaugural moments of the European Renaissance.

Notes

1 The great nineteenth-century Italian literary historian Francesco De Sanctis deemed Cavalcanti "the first Italian poet worthy of the name"; quoted in Donato Pirovano, *Il dolce stil novo* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2014), 15. Zygmunt G. Barański ("Guido Cavalcanti and His First Readers," in Maria Luisa Ardizzone, ed., *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori* [Florence: Cadmo, 2003], 162) maintains that "the first Italian vernacular poet to reach the rank of an *auctoritas* was not Dante, as is commonly assumed" but rather Cavalcanti. Guido Favati (*Inchiesta sul dolce stil nuovo* [Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1975], 197) refers to *Donna me prega* as "the most studied canzone in all of Italian literature," adding that "each century has produced one or more commentaries" and (referring roughly to the period from 1940 to 1970) "in the past thirty years, interpretations have come one after another at a vertiginous pace." Throughout this work, quotations from secondary literature published in languages other than English will be given in my English translation.

2 More often than not, I will try to indicate the distinction between the mortal/human and the immortal/divine through the use of lowercase and uppercase initial letters: "intellect" refers to a (purported) power of the human mind, while "Intellect" refers to an eternal metaphysical entity; similarly, "intellection" refers to an operation of the human mind, while "Intellection" refers to Intellect's act of knowing; "the lady" refers to a woman whom a poet might love or desire, while "the Lady" refers to the metaphysical object of the poet's desire.

3 Alison Cornish, "A Lady Asks: The Gender of Vulgarization in Late Medieval Italy," *PMLA* 115 (2000): 170.

4 Cornish's claim ("A Lady Asks," 170) that "Cavalcanti's reputation for being a great philosopher rests . . . virtually [solely] on the basis of this one lyric

composition [i.e., *Donna me prega*]," along with her dismissal of that canzone's philosophy as "secondhand," is typical of a certain tendency among scholars of late Duecento Italian lyric to downplay the philosophical content of Guido's lyric corpus as a whole and to question the significance of Guido's intellectual endeavor in *Donna me prega*. One should mention that Averroes and other medieval Aristotelians happily insist that philosophy, which progresses incrementally by developing what has been thought in the past, is always (for the better) "secondhand."

5 The term "left wing" may seem anachronistic here, but that term does have a certain currency in the context of late medieval and Renaissance radical Aristotelianism; see, for instance, Ernst Bloch's fascinating study *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left*.

6 Averroes's contemporary and fellow native of al-Andalus, the preeminent Jewish thinker Moses Maimonides, surely belongs in any list of the greatest medieval Arabic rationalist philosophers (he wrote his monumental *Guide of the Perplexed* in Arabic). We will treat Maimonides in Volume Two, since his concern for the carefully nuanced promulgation of philosophy in the guise of religion is especially relevant to Dante's approach in *Comedy*.

7 Marco Berisso, *Poesie dello stilnovo* (Milan: BUR Classici, 2006), 12.

8 The closest to a Long Commentary in this sense is probably Eugenio Savona's very fine *Per un commento a "Donna me prega" di Guido Cavalcanti* (Rome: Ateneo, 1989).

9 Maria Luisa Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti: The Other Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 84.

Part One
The Intelligence of Love
On the Sweet New Style

When famed twentieth-century Italian fiction writer and Nobel laureate Italo Calvino remarked that Guido Cavalcanti "opens the door to modern poetry"[1] he had in mind the famous sonnet *Noi siàn le triste penne isbigotite* ("We are the poor bewildered quills"), a poem that purports in its opening quatrain to be spoken not by the poet but rather by poet's writing instruments (the quill pens, knives, and scissors that were the basic equipment of the medieval scribe):

> Noi siàn le triste penne isbigotite,
> le cesoiuzze e 'l coltellin dolente,
> ch'avemo scritte dolorosamente
> quelle parole che vo' avete udite.[2]
>
> (We are the poor bewildered quills,
> the little scissors and the grieving penknife,
> who have sorrowfully written
> those words that you have heard.)

Calvino considered this poem modern because it denies being the vehicle for the communication of the poet's feelings or of thoughts and ideas that the poet understands and intends to convey. This nonhuman voice speaks of nothing other than its own material production of language. Poetry here seems to be very far on the side of matter rather than spirit and appears to escape the control, determination, or comprehension of the author. Given that many of Cavalcanti's poems represent the death of the author as literally just about to happen, it is tempting to see Guido as one who locates the worth of poetry in writing itself rather than in meaning intended by the writer.

This idea of poetry as a discourse alienated from the author's consciously formulated thought is the opposite of the idea of poetry shared by Cavalcanti and Dante. In *Vita nuova* Dante ridicules poets who are unable to remove the cloak of figural language and explain the true intention of their words:

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> It would be a great shame if someone were to put things in rhyme under the cloak of rhetorical figures or colors and then, when asked, were not able to disrobe his words from that cloak in such manner that they would reveal their true meaning [*verace intendimento*]. And this best friend of mine [*questo mio primo amico*] and I know many who compose poetry in that foolish manner.[3]

The best friend mentioned here is Cavalcanti, to whom Dante dedicated *Vita nuova*.[4] Significantly, Dante is referring here to the poetic personification of Love. As we will come to see, Love in Cavalcanti's poetry has a "true meaning" that needs to be "disrobed": this figure rarely means, and usually has little to do with, love in any ordinary sense.

Dante himself, in *Convivio*, offers a prime instance of a poet's "disrobing his words in such manner that they reveal their true intention/meaning [*intendimento*]." That work, an encyclopedic introduction to philosophy written in the vernacular and meant to reach an audience of non-philosophers, is structured on Dante's allegorical exegesis of a selection of his own lyric poems. Each of the book's various treatises begins with the quotation of the full text of a poem that Dante had written several years prior to his composing *Convivio*; the rest of the treatise presents copious glossing of the text, with Dante explaining that what appears at first sight to be a love poem is meant to be understood as a condensed philosophical essay. *Convivio*'s third treatise, for instance, opens with the text of *Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona* ("Love, who speaks to me in my mind"), a 90-verse canzone, from which I quote the first stanza:

> *Amor* che nella mente mi ragiona
> della mia donna disïosamente,
> move cose di lei meco sovente,
> che lo *'ntelletto* sovr'esse disvia.
> Lo suo parlar sì *dolcemente* sona,
> che l'anima ch'ascolta e che lo sente
> dice: "Oh me lassa! ch'io non son possente
> di dir quel ch'odo della donna mia!"
> E certo e' mi convien lasciare in pria,
> si'io vo' trattar di quel ch'odo di lei,
> ciò che lo mio *intelletto* non comprende;
> e di quel che s'intende
> gran parte, perché dirlo non savrei.
> Dunque, se le mie rime avran difetto
> ch'entreran nella loda di costei,
> di ciò si biasmi il debole *intelletto*
> e 'l parlar nostro, che non ha valore
> di ritrar tutto ciò che dice *Amore*.[5]

> (*Love*, who speaks to me in my mind passionately about my lady, often puts forth to me things about her such that [my] *intellect* cannot follow them. His [i.e., Love's] speech sounds so *sweetly* that [my] soul that listens and that senses says: "Oh, alas! For I don't have the power to say what I hear concerning my lady!" And certainly, if I want to treat of what I hear about her, I ought to leave aside that which my *intellect* does not understand; and [I ought to leave aside as well] a large part of what is understood, since I don't know how to say it in words. And so, if my rhymes, undertaken to praise her, will prove defective, blame this on [my] weak *intellect* and on [human] language, which does not have the power to express everything that *Love* says.)

Without going into an extended analysis of the concepts at play in this stanza, we can point out a few notable elements. The stanza's first and last word, "Love" (*Amor/Amore*), circumscribes three iterations of the word "intellect" (*intelletto*). In each case, the intellect (specified as Dante's) is unable to perform its desired optimal function—unable to understand fully what Love says about Dante's Lady. That intellect is not entirely dysfunctional; it does understand a portion of Love's discourse, although Dante is unable to express in words a large part of that portion. Dante's soul, characterized as a faculty of sense perception ("[my] soul that listens and that senses"), plays its role effectively, but his intellect is for the most part unable to transform what is apprehended into intelligible thoughts. Soul and intellect appear to be different powers. The stanza presents a properly functioning sensitive soul and an underdeveloped or insufficiently operational intellect. In this distinction between the sensitive soul and the intellect, we encounter notions fundamental to Arabo-Islamic philosophical psychology and metaphysics. Cavalcanti's *Donna me prega* (the subject of our Long Commentary in Part Five) is an analysis of Love firmly grounded in this distinction between the human soul and intellect; many of the major concerns of Dante's *Comedy* are ultimately rooted in this distinction. Finally, we should note that Love's speaking is said to sound *sweetly*. We will pick up on this point shortly, in considering the needlessly vexed question concerning the Sweet New Style.

The commentary that Dante devotes in *Convivio* to this single canzone is lengthy (roughly the equivalent of 50 modern print pages), multifaceted, and rich in details. There is no need here to explain Dante's various arguments, since we are presently only concerned with indicating the general thrust of his exegesis by invoking a few brief examples.

The human soul, to fortify its being, naturally desires and wishes to be united with God.[6] But, with the recognition that such union is out of the question, due to God's absolute otherness as the unique Being that truly *is*, the human soul aims for a union that is attainable, a

spiritual (i.e., mental) union with "the goodnesses of nature and of reason" through which the divine shows itself.[7] This uniting is that which we mean when we say "Love."[8] The noble Lady is that with which the human soul mentally unites in the act of Love: she is nothing other than the "goodnesses of nature and of reason"—i.e., the intelligible forms of natural entities and the superlunary Intelligences.[9] In the Arabo-Islamic philosophical tradition there is only one substance in the cosmos that combines, as the sole locus and substrate of their intellection, the intelligible forms of natural entities and the superlunary Intelligences: the Active Intellect. Love means the human soul's uniting with the Active Intellect—an event that philosophy calls the Conjunction and that religions call Salvation. (Part Three of this work is a thorough exposition of Arabic Aristotelianism's teaching on the Active Intellect and related issues, beginning with al-Farabi's foundational treatise, the *Letter on Intellect*.) Love, the speaker in Dante's mind,[10] is the discursive formulation of the truth concerning the reality of the cosmos (knowledge of physics and metaphysics), revealed in the Conjunction with the Active Intellect. Dante has constructed a series of definitions that, joined, tell us that for him the act of loving is his intellect's Conjunction with the Active Intellect.

Dante's allegorizing his song as if its meaning can be stated as a treatise in Arabo-Aristotelian epistemology is not in itself a novelty. A long succession of important Provençal Jewish scholars and philosophers (followers of Maimonides [hence, followers of al-Farabi]), from Samuel Ibn Tibbon[11] to Gersonides, interprets the Song of Songs as a "text [that] describes the *love* of the human *intellect* for the Active Intellect."[12] Two aspects of *Convivio*'s hermeneutics are innovative: Dante is himself the author of the texts that he interprets, and so his readings are somewhat less far-fetched than is normally the case; Dante treats his own writings as worthy of the sort of exegesis that was usually reserved for the Bible.

Guido Cavalcanti is known to literary history as an illustrious member of a major school of early Italian poetry, the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo* (the Sweet New Style). Whether such a school existed and, if so, which poets are to be numbered among its practitioners are matters of debate, as is the question concerning its essential qualities.[13] What is certain is that Dante originated the term in an episode of *Purgatory*. We can also be relatively sure of what Dante meant by distinguishing the poetry of his own circle of associates as "sweet" and "new" in comparison to all previous lyric in Italian—and we will disclose this in due time.

In Canto 24 of *Purgatory* Dante comes upon the poet Bonagiunta da Lucca. The latter was an important figure from the generation before Dante's, an associate of that generation's most acclaimed poet, Guittone d'Arezzo, the undisputed leader of the so-called Tuscan school. Bonagiunta

addresses Dante, referring to one of Dante's lyric compositions (*Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore* ["Ladies that have intellection of Love"]) and praising the poems of Dante and his circle as "sweet" and "new":

> "Ma dì s'i' veggio qui colui che fore
> trasse le *nove* rime, cominciando
> '*Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*.'"
>
> E io a lui: "I' mi son un che, quando
> Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo
> ch'e' ditta dentro vo significando."
>
> "O frate, issa vegg'io," diss' elli, "il nodo
> che 'l Notaro e Guittone e me ritenne
> di qua dal *dolce stil novo* ch'i' odo!
>
> Io veggio ben come le vostre penne
> di retro al dittator sen vanno strette
> che de le nostre certo non avvenne;
>
> e qual più a gradire oltre si mette,
> non vede più da l'uno a l'altro stile";
> e, quasi contentato, si tacette.[14]
>
> (*Purg.* 24.49–63)

> ("But tell me if I see before me
> the one who brought forth those *new* rhymes
> begun with 'Ladies that have intellection of love.'"
>
> And I to him: "I am one who, when *Love*
> inspires me, take note and, as he dictates
> within me, so I set it forth."
>
> "O my brother," he said, "now I understand the knot
> that kept the Notary, Guittone, and me
> on this side of the *sweet new style* I hear.
>
> I clearly understand that your pens follow
> faithfully in the footsteps of the one who dictates [*il dittator*:
> i.e., Love],
> which, to be sure, was not the case with ours.
>
> And he who tries to take a further step in distinguishing
> sees no further difference between the one style and the other."
> Then, as though with satisfaction, he was silent.)

Bonagiunta in effect characterizes as the old style all lyric written in Italian before Dante's *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*—that older style being signified here by the mention of its two most illustrious authors (both of whom Bonagiunta draws upon freely in his own compositions): Giacomo da Lentini, founder and master of the earliest movement in Italian poetry, the Sicilian school; and Guittone d'Arezzo, revered patriarch of those poets who held sway prior to the *stilnovisti*, the Tuscan School. In the literary history expressed here by the fictional Bonagiunta, *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore* (a canzone that Dante had included and glossed in *Vita nuova*) is pivotal, the first instance of the new conception of lyric. Indeed Bonagiunta's (which is actually, of course, Dante's) singling out Dante's poem as extraordinary is well-founded, since that poem is still convincingly celebrated as a major turning point and as the inaugural instance of a new conception of lyric poetry.[15] The novelty of the sweet style is succinctly expressed, albeit not really explained, by the fictional Dante in lines 52–54: unlike his predecessors, Dante takes note, when Love inspires him, and he signifies in writing what is spoken within [his mind]. This enigmatic poetic manifesto (perhaps not so enigmatic to us, now that we have seen what Dante means in *Convivio* when he refers to Love's speech within his mind) has been interpreted variously, and it is fair to say that Dante criticism remains in a state of confusion on this issue. But, as is often his custom, Dante provides plenty of indications, scattered here and there, both in *Comedy* and in his other works, that taken together allow us to reach a definitive conclusion. As we shall see shortly, we can clearly state the essence of the Sweet New Style—at least insofar as that essence is formulated by Dante. (The question concerning the essence of the poetics embraced by that collection of poets customarily recognized as *stilnovisti* is a different, albeit related, matter.) As a preliminary step in this direction, we can take careful note of what Dante says and does not say here: his style involves his not expressing his own subjective thoughts or feelings but conveying what has been addressed to him by an external cause, by a speaker (Love), a *dittator* who is not Dante.

A bit later in *Purgatory*, Dante attenuates his high self-regard (as he will sometimes do), this time on coming to learn that he has been conversing with Guido Guinizelli, a poet of Guittone's generation of perhaps equal fame if much smaller production. Dante, finding himself in the presence of the one whom he regards as his poetic father, tells us that he felt joy

> quand' io odo nomar sé stesso il padre
> mio e de li altri miei miglior che mai
> rime d'amor usar *dolci* e leggiadre.
>
> (*Purg.* 26.97–99)

(when I heard [Guido Guinizelli] give his name,
father to me and to others, my betters,
who always used *sweet* and graceful rhymes of love.)

The association between Guinizelli and the sweet style is reinforced a few *terzine* later, as Dante continues to heap praise on his "father."[16]

E io a lui: "Li *dolci* detti vostri,
che, quanto durerà l'uso moderno
faranno cari ancora i loro incostri."

(*Purg.* 26.112–114)

(And I to him: "Your *sweet* verses,
which as long as modern custom will last,
will make their very ink seem precious.")

Twice within the short space of a dozen verses Dante praises Guinizelli's poems as "sweet," indicating that Dante traces his own avant-garde modernism (*l'uso moderno*; line 113)—the *dolce stil nuovo*—back to this poet of Bonagiunta's generation. Dante's literary history differs from Bonagiunta's insofar as he recognizes a pre-history to the Sweet New Style, with Guinizelli as its precursor and hence true founder. Dante has given us elements necessary for understanding the essence of the modern poetics: two different conceptions of poetry (Bonagiunta—the old style; Guinizelli—the new style) are embodied in two well-known predecessors.

That Dante has set things up in this manner is no accident, since Bonagiunta and Guinizelli were irrevocably bound to each other, thanks to the popularity of a pair of sonnets that they exchanged and that became among the most frequently circulated and most commonly invoked of all Italian texts in the late Duecento and early Trecento.[17] This *tenzone* (a debate between two poets) was initiated by Bonagiunta, who addressed this derisive sonnet to Guinizelli:

Voi, ch'avete mutata la mainiera
de li plagenti ditti de l'amore
de la forma dell'esser là dov'era
per avansare ogn'altro trovatore,
avete fatto como la lumera,
ch'a le scure partite dà sprendore,
ma non quine ove luce l'alta spera,
la quale avansa e passa di chiarore.
Così passate voi di sottigliansa,
e non si può trovar chi ben ispogna,
cotant'è iscura, vostra parlatura.

Ed è tenuta gran dissimigliansa,
ancor che 'l senno venga da Bologna,
14 traier canson per forsa da scrittura.[18]

(You—who have changed the style of pleasant love poems from the form of being [*la forma dell' esser*] that it had, to outdo every other composer—have done as does the lantern that [only] shines in dark/obscure places [*scure partite*] but not there where the high sphere [i.e., the Sun], which outdoes and surpasses [all other lights] in brightness, shines. In this [same] way, you surpass [other poets] in subtleness [*sottigliansa*], and your poetic language [*parlatura*] is so obscure [*iscura*] that no one can be found who might really explain it. And, even though wisdom [*senno*] comes from Bologna, to drag/extract [*traier*] with force a song out from writing [*scrittura*] is considered a very strange thing.)

The sonnet presents a series of mocking reproaches and insults. Bonagiunta accuses Guinizelli of inventing a new manner of composing poetry out of personal ambition for fame as a poet ("to outdo every other composer").[19] The third verse's *forma dell'esser* ("form of being"), the Italian equivalent of the Latin Aristotelian *forma entis*[20] and a parody of Guinizelli's philosophizing lexicon, is a needlessly convoluted and abstract expression. Guinizelli is described as a lantern that shines in dark or obscure places: he may well be a leader or guide,[21] but only of an unknown group of provincial poets in a place (Bologna) devoid of real stars. He is puny and his light negligible in comparison to the radiant Sun that lights up Tuscany.[22] Guinizelli's verse is exceedingly subtle, to the extent that it is impossible to understand.[23] The closing tercet levels the most serious charge, condemning the fundamental flaw brought about by Guinizelli's mutating the essence of poetics: although Bologna—at the time second only to Paris as a seat of university learning and first in the field of law (Guinizelli was a distinguished Bolognese jurist)—may well be a fountain of wisdom (*senno*), this fact does not mean that good poetry can be composed from scholastic discourse. Guinizelli is accused of drawing, pulling, or extracting (*traier*[24]) his songs out from *scrittura*—which is to say that he yanks learning out from books then dresses it up as love poetry.[25]

Guinizelli replied to Bonagiunta's attack obliquely, with the following subtly devastating sonnet:

Omo ch'è saggio non corre leggero
ma a passo grada sì com' vol misura;
quand' ha pensato riten su' pensero
4 infin a tanto che 'l ver l'asigura.
Foll'è chi crede sol veder lo vero

e non pensare che altri i pogna cura;
non se dev'omo tener troppo altero
ma dé guardar so stato e sua natura.
Volan ausel' per air di straine guise
ed han diversi loro operamenti,
né tutti d'un volar né d'un ardire.
Dëo natura e 'l mondo in grado mise,
e fe' despari senni e intendimenti:
perzò ciò ch'omo pensa non dé dire.[26]

(A man who is wise does not run hastily but with measured steps as moderation requires; after he has thought he keeps his thought [to himself] until such time that it is confirmed by the truth. He who believes that he alone sees the truth and doesn't think that others strive to do so is foolish; a man ought not regard himself too highly but ought to consider his status and his nature. Birds fly through the air in various manners, and their doings/operations [*operamenti*] are diverse; they do not all fly in the same way, nor are they all equally audacious [*d'un ardire*]. God established nature and the world in a ranked order, and he made different [levels of] wisdom [*senni*] and intelligence [*intendimenti*]: that is why a man ought not say what he thinks.)

This poem would be virtually unrecognizable as the rejoinder in a *tenzone* if it were not so frequently paired with Bonagiunta's in the manuscript tradition. Still, there is at least one subtle indication that Guinizelli partially adheres to the widely followed norm according to which the response-poem in a *tenzone* imitates the rhyme and meter of the poem that initiates the exchange: in both poems a variant of the same word (*senno*/*senni*) occupies the center of verse 13.[27] The voice of Guinizelli's sonnet is objective, universal, third-person, not a first-person subjective voice ("I") addressing some particular second-person interlocutor ("you"). Guinizelli apparently ignores Bonagiunta, which is indeed what he aims to do, given that his point is that engaging in discourse with the poet from Lucca would be a waste of his time. The gist of the first quatrain is that one should think before one speaks, taking the time to verify the soundness of one's thinking—the implication being that Bonagiunta's attack against Guinizelli's poetics was ill-founded. There are various approaches to the truth, and so one should not be complacently satisfied with one's own view (lines 5–6). Instead one should curb one's haughtiness, taking into account the limitations of one's own status and nature (lines 7–8)—the implication being that Bonagiunta is to some degree naturally limited and inferior. The first tercet (lines 9–11) presents an implied analogy: just as there are various species of birds (for instance, we can add, some soaring high and others flitting branch-to-branch near

the ground) with various activities, so there are various species of humans, some aiming for lofty attainments and others who perform more lowly functions—the implication being that Guinizelli, unlike Bonagiunta, is suited for an elevated and audacious (*ardire*: "to dare") undertaking. The closing tercet clarifies the difference: the two poets occupy two different ranks in the divinely willed natural order, Guinizelli being endowed with a higher degree of wisdom and intelligence. There can be no fruitful communication between the two (indeed Guinizelli's sonnet does not appear to address the poet from Lucca). Referring back to the sonnet's opening, the final verse implies either that Bonagiunta should just keep his thoughts to himself, since nothing that he might say to Guinizelli would be worthy of the latter's attention, or that Guinizelli should not express his superior thoughts to one, such as Bonagiunta, who is naturally incapable of understanding them.[28] The general thrust of the sonnet is that, not being of the philosopher's species, Bonagiunta cannot understand Guinizelli's discourse and so should refrain from judging it.

When Dante thinks of Guinizelli, he nearly always thinks of the latter's famous canzone *Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore*.[29] We see Guinizelli at his most philosophical in that poem's fifth stanza:

> Splende 'n la 'ntelligenzïa del cielo
> Deo crïator più che 'n nostr'occhi 'l sole:
> ella intende suo fattor oltra 'l cielo,
> e 'l ciel volgiando, a Lui obedir tole;
> e con' segue al primero,
> del giusto Deo beato compimento,
> così dar dovria, al vero,
> la bella donna, poi che 'n gli occhi splende
> del suo gentil, talento
> che mai di lei obedir non si disprende.[30]
>
> (41–50)

> (God the Creator shines in the celestial sphere's Intelligence more than the Sun shines in our eyes. It [i.e., the Intelligence] intellects its Maker beyond the celestial sphere, and, turning the celestial sphere, begins to obey Him; and just as [the Intelligence's] blissful satisfaction/fulfillment/self-realization [*compimento*] from the Just God follows instantly [*al primero*], in the same way, in truth, the beautiful lady, as soon as she shines in the eyes of her noble [lover], should [instantly] give him the desire [*talento*] to never leave off obeying her.)

An accurate translation and account of these verses must be attuned to certain subtle distinctions and must keep in mind the view of the cosmos that Latin scholastic philosophy inherited from the Arabic *falasifa*.

In this view, formulated most influentially by Avicenna in his *Metaphysics of the Healing* (translated into Latin ca. AD 1150), there are, other than the First Cause [God], three kinds of metaphysical entities: Intelligences, celestial souls, and celestial bodies.[31] Such entities are metaphysical in the sense that they are divine, supernatural, immortal; they are not subject to generation and corruption (birth and death). Intelligences do not move; the motion of celestial souls and celestial bodies is infinite and circular. (Physical things have finite, linear motions.) A celestial sphere is the union of a celestial soul and a celestial body. Each of the celestial spheres of the Ptolemaic cosmos (familiar to every reader of *Paradiso*: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Fixed Stars, and the Primum Mobile) was created by emanation from its Intelligence (and ultimately by God). The celestial soul (described by Avicenna as a lover who "hopes to conform to and . . . aspires to resemble" its beloved[32]) desires (loves, wills to attain) its Intelligence and moves toward union with it; since this union is impossible, this motion is perpetual and, without an endpoint, is a constant circular turning. The celestial body is immediately and without volition dragged along with its soul, and it is this constant turning of celestial bodies that humans observe from earth in gazing at the stars and planets. An Intelligence, created by emanation from the Intelligence in the rank just above it (and ultimately by God), is always actually intellecting that superior Intelligence, and, through this intermediary, intellecting God, from whom originates a constant flux of pure intelligence analogous to the light of the Sun. An Intelligence always actually intellects and thus never desires. It is the celestial soul—and *only* the celestial soul—that desires (it desires to become its Intelligence); a celestial body does not desire because it makes no choices. God's light is a constant flux that illuminates the Intelligences and maintains the perpetual order of the cosmos.

The twofold primary force of this stanza's analogy is clear: first, as instantly as an Intelligence causes its celestial sphere to move in a ceaseless circular turning, hence obeying God, so the beautiful lady ought instantly to give her noble lover the desire to never stop obeying her; second, God's relation to an Intelligence is analogous to the beautiful lady's relation to her noble lover (*Dio* : *Intelligenza* :: *donna* : *gentil* [*amante*]); both shine down (*splende*) on the one who thus obeys. There is, as well, another implicit analogy that indicates the depth of Guinizelli's familiarity with the relevant issues: just as God gives an Intelligence immediate satisfaction/fulfillment/self-realization (*compimento*), so the lady ought to give her lover immediate *desire* (*talento*); as a corollary, satisfaction is for the Intelligence what desire is for the lover (Intelligence : satisfaction :: lover : desire). The apparent imperfection and dissonance of this analogy (satisfaction ≠ desire) are significant. Guinizelli's positing the lover's desire as the analogical equivalent of the Intelligence's satisfaction is not only a recognition of

the ontological difference between two orders of reality (the physical and the metaphysical); it is also scientifically precise, attributing to the lover the very kind of satisfaction enjoyed by celestial souls—namely, desire. As al-Bitruji says in *De motibus coelorum* (a work cited by Dante in a passage of *Convivio* discussed earlier), celestial spheres, receiving a power that comes from above, move "with *desire* because to them it is *satisfaction*" ("*cum* desiderio*, quia est* complementum *eis*" [*desiderio* = verse 49's *talento*; *complementum* = verse 46's *compimento*]).[33] While Intelligences are always completely satisfied, a celestial soul is never satisfied but always moved by desire. A celestial soul is an entity that constantly moves because it desires but does not ever attain its satisfaction; for such an entity, desire *is* its completion. Guinizelli's analogy is not at all imperfect: the lover, like the celestial soul, desires a satisfaction that will never come, to such an extent that desire (*talento*) itself is completion (*compimento*). For Guinizelli, cosmology provides a scientific analogue of *fin amor* as endlessly deferred satisfaction.

We have treated *Al cor gentil*, a poem with a uniquely elevated status in Dante's estimation and a key to understanding Dante's formulation of the *dolce stil nuovo*, to show that Guinizelli does exactly what Bonagiunta's sonnet accuses him of doing: he uses university-style learning as a foundation for his composing. And, returning to Dante, we will find plenty of evidence that in his view it is precisely this—philosophical content—that separates Dante and his stilnovist colleagues from all previous Italian lyric poets. For Dante, Guinizelli's verses are "sweet" because they are exquisitely philosophical.

Recall Dante's definition of the Sweet New Style in *Purgatory* 24:

> E io a lui: "I' mi son un che, quando
> *Amor* mi spira, noto, e a quel modo
> ch'e' ditta dentro vo significando."
>
> (And I to him: "I am one who, when *Love*
> inspires me, takes note and, as he dictates
> within me, so I set it forth.")

Dante's inspiration is Love's speaking within him; Love is the *dittator* (line 59), the "speaker." In *Convivio*, Love is characterized as the speaker (*ragionatore*) who gives birth to Dante's thoughts.[34] Dante takes note of Love's *ragione* ("speech," "reason") and then writes that *ragione* in the form of verse. Dante writes thoughts, and presumably other poets do the same. But what makes Dante's poetry new is that he does not write thoughts that can be legitimately characterized as *his*.[35] Thoughts in his verse that may appear to be his are in fact thoughts of which he is not the origin. Love is the origin of his thoughts. We know

from *Convivio* that Love is Dante's name for the union of his soul with the noble Lady.[36] We also know that this Lady is that in which a good portion of the divine light shows itself to Dante.[37] And thus we know that, since the divine light shows itself in the goodnesses of nature and reason,[38] this noble Lady is nothing other than the goodnesses of nature and reason—the intelligible forms of natural and metaphysical things and the Intelligences. Loving for Dante is knowing the truth concerning the reality of the cosmos. Dante's thoughts, later expressed in writing, are the truths born in his mind in this act of knowing/loving. To be a stilnovist, in Dante's view, one must give expression to such thoughts; doing so is *new*, since nothing of the sort had yet been done in the history of Romance vernacular lyric. In this conception, poetry is not a vehicle for self-expression or a means to accomplish any sort of aim. The poet does not try to do anything whatsoever, other than to declare in writing (*scrittura*), to give written expression to, for an elite audience of peers (and so perhaps to teach) those physical and metaphysical truths that he has learned from loving (i.e., from studying). In claiming that he is inspired by Love, Dante is not touting the sincerity or spirituality of his verse.[39] (I need to reiterate that this is *Dante's* formulation of the Sweet New Style. The question as to whether and to what degree those poets recognized as s*tilnovisti* conform to this model is a different matter. There *is* one poem that conforms absolutely to this model: Cavalcanti's *Donna me prega*.)

This loving (seeing the truths of the reality of the cosmos) is not a mystical knowing. One cannot attain it by relying solely on one's own efforts and natural genius. It is a matter of study, learning from others who have traversed the path that leads to *scientia* (knowledge). In *De vulgari eloquentia* Dante insists that excellence in the most noble mode of poetic composition—which makes poets into "children of God (speaking figuratively)"—requires "the exertion of the intellect, dedicated study of technique, and immersion in knowledge."[40] Disparaging "the foolish claims of those [poets] who, devoid of technique and knowledge [*scientia*], relying on natural talent [*ingenio*] alone, lay hands on the noblest topics, those that should be sung in the highest style," Dante exhorts such poets to "lay such presumption aside; and, if nature or their own incompetence has made them geese, let them not try to emulate the star-seeking eagle."[41] No doubt Dante has in mind here Guinizelli's representation of the difference between superior and inferior (ill-educated) poets as the difference between species of birds.[42] In *Convivio* Dante declares that "Love" is his name for philosophical study.[43]

For Dante, the most noble kind of poetry is the expression of thoughts that, although the poet can disrobe them from the cloak of rhetorical figures and explain them to others, are not the poet's own. Those who rely on their own thoughts, without study, are presumptuous and foolish. The Sweet New Style is the expression in verse of knowledge attained

through the study of university-style *scrittura*. In *Convivio* "sweetness" is a virtual synonym for philosophical writing:

> By the resemblances discussed, it may be seen who are these movers to whom I speak, who are the movers of this heaven, like Boethius and Cicero, who with the *sweetness* [*dolcezza*] of their discourse guided me, as has been said above, along the path of *love*—that is, into the study of this most gentle lady Philosophy, by the rays of their star, which is their writing [*scrittura*] about her; for in every science the written word is a star filled with light which demonstrates that science.[44]

Boethius and Cicero are, metaphorically, metaphysical Intelligences ("movers of this heaven"), and their writings are celestial bodies (their "star") that shine sweet rays of science down to the human intellect. Dante's love for the noble Lady is his love for wisdom (*Philo-Sophia*), and wisdom, full of sweetness, *is* demonstratively certain philosophy:

> Here we must observe that this lady is Philosophy, who truly is a lady full of *sweetness* [*dolcezza*], adorned with honor, wondrous in wisdom, glorious in freedom. . . . And where [the canzone] says "*Let him who would see bliss* ["*salute*": "salvation"] *gaze into the eyes of this lady*," the eyes of this lady are her demonstrations [*dimostrazioni*], which when directed into the eyes of the *intellect*, *enamor* [*innamorano*] the soul that is liberated from the earthly condition. O *most sweet* [*dolcissimi*] and ineffable looks [*sembianti*], sudden captors of the human mind, who appear in demonstrations of the eyes of Philosophy when she converses with her *lovers*! Truly in you is *salvation* [*salute*], by which he who gazes on you is made blessed [*beato*] and *is saved* [*si salva*] from the death of ignorance and vice.[45]

Philosophy *enamors* (*in-amore*), shines into, the soul of the one who learns its demonstrations, which manifest semblances (*sembianti*) that are most sweet (*dolcissimi*). The Love (*Amor*; *Purg.* 24.53) that is "within" (*dentro*; 24.54) and that Dante then signifies (*vo significando*; 24.54) is inspired (*mi spira*; 24.53) by the certain knowledge attained through demonstrative reasoning (*dimostrazioni*). Dante's inspiration comes from truth itself. This passage celebrates precisely a salvation (*salute*; *si salva*) that comes about through science and through which the lover of wisdom (the philosopher) attains a kind of immortal beatitude (*beato*) and exemption from ignorance and vice. Dante was probably aware that a passage such as this would (as it has done) scandalize certain readers not prepared to accept the notion of a philosophical salvation, a beatification accessible apart from Christianity. Such readers apologize for Dante by regarding *Convivio* as a philosophical excess that is corrected by the theological *Comedy*. But is Beatrice (*Beatrix*: she who makes one *beato*, "blissfully

happy") really all that different from Lady Philosophy? Is the salvation provided by Beatrice anything other than the Salvation of Intellect? We will consider these questions in the second volume of this work.

Dante's formulation of the essence of the *dolce stil nuovo* is not at all opaque. As it turns out, the Sweet New Style is not really a matter of style but rather of content[46]: it is love lyric that cloaks a coherent meaning, derived from the poet's advanced university-style studies, that can be formulated by the poet as prose philosophy. According to Dante, what distinguishes the *stilnovisti* from their predecessors (who compose in a "foolish manner") is that the former write philosophical poetry while the latter do not.

That the best poetry must express philosophical content is a straightforward and not earth-shattering idea. But it is Dante's idea—one that he says he shares with his *primo amico*, Guido Cavalcanti (*Vita nuova* 25.10, quoted earlier). Yet Dante scholars, ignoring several convincing accounts written long ago, persist in treating this as a mystery.[47]

That Cavalcanti's *Donna me prega* is philosophical is obvious. An exception to the rest of Cavalcanti's corpus, that famous canzone stands alone in that it is nearly entirely literal (not allegorical), with few "figures" or "colors." Despite this, it has proven nearly impossible to understand—and this makes it a fascinating challenge (which we will take up in Part Five). The philosophy in Guido's other poems is latent, calling for allegoresis attuned to his thinking. This is what we will offer in Part Four.

To insist that Cavalcanti's poetry is philosophical is not to deny that it is poetry. Guido's lyrics no doubt express and stir emotions; they observe and invent rules of formal craftsmanship; they are enigmatic, taking unexpected twists and turns into unheard of territory; they are often beautiful, both in language and sentiment, while at other times imparting fearful despondency; they offer uniquely realized dramatizations involving multiple personified elements of the soul and the body; they experiment with figural language and play with intertextual relations. Nor is it to deny that Cavalcanti's lyric persona does stage his fragmentation and disappearance in a way that seems strikingly modern. Still, whatever one might say about the literariness of Guido's lyrics, the fact remains that those poems point toward a certain philosophical content and may rightly be regarded as allegories through which Cavalcanti communicates a definite and coherent view concerning fundamental realities of human existence.

Notes

1 "With these verses Guido Cavalcanti opens the door to modern poetry and at the same time closes it. Not until Mallarmé does a poet again recognize that his poetry happens, is produced 'on the empty paper defended by its whiteness'." Quoted in Maria Corti, *Scritti su Cavalcanti e Dante* (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), 43. Unless otherwise noted, all translations throughout this work are mine.

2 Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, ed. Roberto Rea and Giorgio Inglese (Rome: Carocci, 2011), 114–115 (Poem XVIII, lines 1–4); trans. Lowry Nelson, Jr., *The Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti* (New York: Garland, 1986), 25. All quotations of Cavalcanti's poetry (unless otherwise noted) will be from Rea and Inglese's edition, hereafter abbreviated as *R/I*. All further translations of Cavalcanti will be mine unless otherwise noted.

3 *Vita nuova* 25.10:

> Però che grande vergogna sarebbe a colui che rimasse cose sotto vesta di figura o di colore rettorico, e poscia, domandato, non sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotale vesta, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento. E questo mio primo amico e io ne sapemo bene di quelli che così rimano stoltamente.
>
> *Nuova edizione commentata delle opere di Dante*, ed. Donato Pirovano and Marco Grimaldi (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2015), vol. 1, 214–215

4 In *Vita nuova* 30.3 Dante refers to Guido as "questo mio primo amico a cui io ciò scrivo" ("my best friend, for whom I write this [book]"; *Nuova edizione*, 234. At the time, Dante (then in his late 20s) seems to have regarded Guido, who was about ten years his senior, as his mentor. Consensus among Dante scholars is that there was a rupture in the friendship between Dante and his *primo amico* some time before Guido's death in August 1300.

5 *Convivio* 3, Canzone 2; Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*, ed. Franca Brambilla Ageno (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1995), vol. 2 (Text), 145; emphases added.

6 "L'anima umana . . . naturalmente disia e vuole a Dio essere unita per lo suo essere fortificare"; *Convivio* 3.2.7, 157.

7 "E però che nelle bontadi della natura e della ragione si mostra la divina, vène che naturalmente l'anima umana con quelle per via spirituale sé unisce" ("And because the divine shows itself in the goodnesses of nature and reason, it happens that the human soul naturally unites itself mentally with those goodnesses"); *Convivio* 3.2.8, 157. It is likely that the "goodnesses of nature" are the intelligible forms—scientifically known definitions and causes/reasons for—of natural entities (the scientific aspect of Dante's discourse is witnessed, for example, by his citing in this same argument, for the principle that every effect retains something of the essence of its cause, the twelfth-century AD Andalusian Arabic astronomer Alpetragius [Al-Bitruji]). It is likely that the "goodnesses of reason" are the superlunary Intelligences emanated from God (the metaphysical aspect of Dante's discourse is witnessed by his citing in this argument, especially, the *Liber de causis*, a pseudo-Aristotelian treatise widely studied in Arabo-Islamic and Latin Scholastic philosophy). Both of these sorts of things—the intelligible forms of natural entities; the Intelligences—show divinity to humans, insofar as all effects show something of their causes. The term "goodnesses" comes from the *Liber de causis*, where it primarily means intelligible forms.

8 "E questo unire è quello che noi dicemo amore" ("This union is what we call love"); *Convivio* 3.2.8; 157.

9 "Questo amore, cioè l'unimento della mia anima con questa gentil donna, nella quale della divina luce assai mi si mostrava" ("This love—namely, the union of my soul with this noble lady, in which a good portion of the divine light shows itself to me"); *Convivio* 3.2.9; 158.

10 "This love is that speaker [*ragionatore*] about whom I talk [in the canzone *Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*], since from him thoughts were continually being born in gazing upon and considering the worth of this lady

who was made, mentally, one thing with my soul [i.e., who became united with my mind]. The place in which I say he speaks is the mind"; *Convivio* 3.2.9; 158.

11 I single out the early thirteenth-century philosopher, translator, and commentator Samuel ibn Tibbon, whose activity centered around Marseilles and whose influence extended beyond Provence to (especially) Spain, Italy, and the Near East, to call attention to his remarkable commentary on Ecclesiastes, the study of which (including James T. Robinson's fine Introduction) I recommend as a companion to this work (and especially to *Dante and the Salvation of Intellect*). As Robinson remarks, this commentary is "the foundational work of the Maimonidean tradition" (James T. Robinson, *Samuel ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007], back cover), and thus it was the major catalyst for the Maimonidean controversy, an ongoing battle over the permissibility of the study of philosophy that preoccupied the educated Jewish community (and was mediated by Christian political leaders) in Europe throughout the thirteenth century and the first decades of the fourteenth century. For the strong possibility of a direct line of influence running from Samuel ibn Tibbon to Dante, see the next note.

12 Menachem Kellner, from the Introduction to his translation of Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides), *Commentary on Song of Songs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), xvi; emphases added. Gersonides' commentary, composed in 1325, just a few years after Dante's death, may be regarded as the state of the art of philosophical commentary on Song of Songs in Dante's time and orbit (Gersonides was active in Provence, specifically in Avignon). If I mention analogues from the Hebrew philosophical tradition composed in Southern France and Italy rather than from the medieval Latin tradition, this is because commentaries on the Song of Songs in the latter tradition tend to be theological, religious, and mystical, while the former adheres closely to the teachings of Maimonides (and hence to the tradition of the Arabic *falasifa*). Dante's devotion to this Arabic philosophical tradition is apparent throughout *Convivio* and distilled in Dante's praising "the master of human reason, Aristotle, who always first fought against the opponents of truth and then, these having been convinced, demonstrated the truth" (*Convivio* 4.2.16, 270). One of the Jewish intellectuals who wrote a Hebrew commentary on the Song of Songs was Immanuel ben Solomon (Immanuel of Rome), a poet and scholar associated with Dante's circle in Verona, whose writings include a moving lamentation in Italian verse on the occasion of Dante's death and a loose imitation of *Comedy* in Hebrew. As Robinson points out (*Samuel ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 6), Immanuel of Rome "excerpted large sections from Ibn Tibbon's writings and incorporated them into his own commentaries on the Bible." On Dante's contact with Hebrew and Arabic thought see Giorgio Battistoni, "Dante and the Three Religions," in *Dante and Islam*, ed. Jan Ziolkowski (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 214–234; see also Battistoni's *Dante, Verona e la cultura ebraica* (Florence: Giuntina, 2004).

13 Favati (*Inchiesta*, 78–105) presents the case for a minimalist understanding of the term "school" in reference to the stilnovists, and he persuasively argues that Cavalcanti—who was famously iconoclastic—did not regard himself nor was he regarded as a member of any poetic school. For an outstanding thorough treatment of the Sweet New Style, see Pirovano, *Il dolce stil novo*. For a judicious account of the essential qualities of the *dolce stil nuovo*, see Berisso's Introduction to his anthology *Poesie dello stilnovo*. To summarize Berisso: for the *stilnovisti*, poetry (both thought and expression)

is an end-in-itself, not a means to gain some external aim, such as the favor of a desired lady or public acclaim; insofar as poetry has an aim, this is part of an entire program for the ethical and intellectual flourishing of the self; poetry is not addressed to the vulgar public at large but rather to oneself and one's peers, who comprise a select group of initiates; ideologically, the *stilnovisti* combine both democratic and elitist impulses, thoroughly rejecting ideas of nobility rooted in family origins or blood ancestry, yet regarding the masses of ordinary people as ignoble and ill-educated. Guglielmo Gorni ("Guinizelli e la nuova 'mainera,'" in *Per Guido Guinizelli*, ed. R. Avesani, G. Billanovich, M. Ferrari, and G. Pozzi [Padua: Antenore, 1980]) mentions the following as characteristic elements of the *stil novo*: the motifs of the lady-as-angel and of the salvific effect of her greeting (*salute*); nobility defined not as social status but as moral virtue correlated with love; the "representation of internal events with reference to a transcendental subject" (I take this to mean the poet's description of things happening to/in his soul and body on account of a relation with a metaphysical Intelligence—i.e., the Active Intellect); the "poetic hypostasis [i.e., the allegorization through personification and figural representation] of a metaphysical analysis" (38–39). And, perhaps above all else, stilnovism involves writing lyric that functions as scientific psychology, as a *scientia de anima* (Pirovano, *Il dolce stil novo*, 27). As Carmen F. Blanco Valdés remarks (*El amor en el "Dolce stil novo": Fenomenolgia: teoría y práctica*, [Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 1996], 26), citing Guido Favati ("Contribuito alla determinazione del problema dello Stil Novo," *Studi Mediolatini e Volgari* 4 [1956]: 63), "in all the stilnovist poets, one notes the absence of any proposition that cannot be sustained in the light of the philosophical-scientific theories of the era."

14 Dante, *Purgatorio* 24.49–63, trans. Jean Hollander and John Hollander (New York: Doubleday, 2003), emphases added; trans. slightly modified.

15 Berisso (*Poesie dello stilnovo*, 17) calls this canzone and its treatment in *Vita nuova* "surely the most profound revolution in the conception of Italian (and perhaps not only Italian) lyric poetry in the Middle Ages." In Berisso's view, Dante's locating his bliss (*beatitudine*) "in those words that praise my lady" amounts to a conception of poetry as self-sufficient, an end-in-itself rather than a means to bring about some desired outcome.

16 For Dante's use of *padre* here as a significant allusion to the tenzone between Guinizelli and Guittone that we will discuss below—an exchange initiated with Guinizelli's *O caro padre mio*, addressed to Guittone, see Pirovano, *Il dolce stil novo*, 65–67. Dante removes Guittone from the position of father, replacing him with Guinizelli.

17 Claudio Giunta, *La poesia nell'età di Dante: La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizelli* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), 75. Pirovano (*Il dolce stil novo*, 105), following Giunta (84), calls this tenzone "the foundation myth of the new poetry."

18 Guido Guinizelli, *Rime*, ed. Pietro Pelosi (Naples: Liguori, 1998), 75–76.

19 Although this "new manner" is often taken to be Bonagiunta's general characterization of Guinizelli's poetry as a whole, Marian Papahagi ("Guido Guinizelli e Guittone d'Arezzo: Contribuito a una ridefinizione dello spazio poetico predantesco," in *Guittone d'Arezzo nel settimo centenario della morte*, ed. Michelangelo Picone [Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 1995], 269–293) persuasively argues that he is reproaching Guido for having changed *his own* manner, which had previously been in keeping with the Sicilian and Tuscan traditions. Indeed, less than a handful of Guinizelli's lyrics can legitimately be termed proto-stilnovist, and most of his small corpus is recognizably Guittonian.

20 Berisso, *Poesie dello stilnovo*, 84.
21 Pelosi (*Rime*, p. 75), noting that in the Duecento *lumera*—meaning "light" or "lantern"—figuratively signified "guide," "source of inspiration," or "model," sees the comparison between the lantern and the Sun as a distinction between an inferior and a superior conception of poetry, with Guinizelli characterized as the leader of those who maintain the inferior conception.
22 For an enumeration of more than ten different readings of the *alta spera*, see Roberto Rea, "'Avete fatto como la lumera' (sulla tenzone fra Bonagiunta e Guinizelli)," *Critica del testo* 6 (2003): 934–935.
23 In glossing line 9's *sottiglianza* ("subtleness") Pelosi points to two pertinent passages in Dante: *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.10.4, where Dante claims that he and his friend Cino da Pistoia (a master of the *dolce stil nuovo*) have composed poetry "more sweetly and subtly" (*dulcius . . . subtiliusque*) than other vernacular poets because their poems are more firmly grounded in Latin; and *Convivio* 4.2.10, where Dante tells us why he calls his canzone *Le dolci rime d'amor ch'i' solia* "subtle" (*sottile*): "It [the canzone] says *sottile* with reference to the meaning of the words, which proceed by subtly arguing and disputing." We can deduce that by "subtle" Dante means a discourse that presents a university-style philosophical argument such as those written in Latin. Berisso (*Poesie*, 29), citing Francesco Bruni, "Semantica della sottigliezza," in Bruni, *Testi e chierici del Medioevo* [Genoa: Marietti, 1991], 91–133), characterizes *sottiglianza* as discourse that exceeds the limit between what a scholar knows and what his audience can reasonably be expected to know.
24 In the passage from *Purgatory* 24 discussed earlier, the fictional Bonagiunta uses the same verb, *trarre*, to describe Dante's composing in the new style: "Ma dì s'i' veggio qui colui che fore/*trasse* le *nove* rime" ("But tell me if I see here before me the one who/drew forth [or, pulled out] the new rhymes"); *Purg.* 24.49–50. Dante embraces the verb and by implication the act of extracting verse from s*crittura*.
25 That *scrittura* here means Latin university-style discourse, as affirmed by Favati (*Inchiesta*, 61–64), seems obvious, especially given the pointed reference to Bologna. Still, some critics, including Paolo Borsa (*La nuova poesia di Guido Guinizelli* [Florence: Cadmo, 2007], 108), Rea ("Avete fatto," 954), and Gorni ("Guinizelli e la nuova," 50) are convinced that Bonagiunta, criticizing Guinizelli for employing the Bible in the service of a profane *eros,* means *Scrittura*/Scripture. While there is no doubt that Guinizelli does (as will Cavalcanti, copiously) frequently weave scriptural texts into his poetry, reading s*crittura* to mean philosophical discourse is more consistent with the sonnet's attacks on Guittone's *sottigliansa* and obscurity.
26 Pelosi, *Rime*, 77–78.
27 Giunta, *La poesia*, 90. On formal imitation in the early Italian *tenzone*, see the second essay ("Metra, forma e stile della tenzone") in Claudio Giunta, *Due saggi sulla tenzone* (Rome-Padua: Editrice Antenore, 2002).
28 Citing several passages from Proverbs (such as Proverbs 10:14: "Sapientes abscondunt scientiam" ["Wise people conceal their knowledge"]), Pelosi (*Rime*, 77–78) reads the final verse as Guido's assertion that he himself should not say what he thinks. See also Berisso, *Poesie*, 30.
29 Mario Marti, *Enciclopedia dantesca* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1970), entry "Guinizelli": "From the time of his youth, Guinizelli's canzone had become for Dante an *auctoritas*, a guiding text, particularly for its treatment of ideological principles: the identity of love and the noble heart; the cathartic and beatifying effect of love; nobility of heart and mind; and the clear and decisive aspiration to make the lady into 'a celestial

Intelligence' in which 'God the Creator shines' so that man might actualize, on earth, his own potential perfection." See also Berisso, *Poesie*, 23–24. On *Al cor gentil* as the target of Bonagiunta's *Voi, ch'avete mutata la maniera*, see Pirovano, *Il dolce stil novo*, 108–109. For an excellent analysis of the canzone, showing its philosophical depth, see Maria Luisa Ardizzone, "Love and Natural Law in the Manifesto of the *dolce stil novo*," in *The Craft and the Fury: Essays in Memory of Glauco Cambon*, *Italica* 9 (2000), 35–57.

30 Pelosi, *Rime*, 41–42.

31 On Intelligences, celestial souls, and celestial bodies, see my "Dante as Celestial Soul: The Final Verses of *Paradiso* in the Light of Avicenna's Metaphysics," *MLN* 127, 1 Supplement (2011): 99–109.

32 *The* Metaphysica *of Avicenna*, trans. Parviz Morewedge (New York: Routledge, 1973), 98.

33 Quoted in *Convivio*, ed. Ageno, 156.

34 *Convivio* 3.2.9; 158.

35 This is emphasized in *Vita nuova* 19.2 (*Nuova edizione*, 157), where, recounting the circumstances of the composition of *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*—the canzone that Dante presents as the pivotal discovery of the new style—Dante claims that he himself did not really speak that poem: "Then, I must tell you, my tongue, as if moved of its own accord, spoke and said: '*Ladies who have intelligence of love*'." A quatrain (quoted in Pirovano, *Il dolce stil novo*, 51) from a sonnet by Cino da Pistoia accords perfectly with Dante's characterization of poetry spoken by Love, not by the poet, as "new" (*nova*): "Tu mi pari, canzon, sí bella e *nova*,/che di chiamarti mia non aggio ardire;/dí che ti fece Amor, se vuoi ben dire,/dentro al mio cor che sua valenza prova" ("Song, you seem to me to be so beautiful and new [*nova*]/that I dare not call you mine; if you want to speak properly [i.e., honestly], say that Love made you in my heart which shows Love's worth"). We see here an essential quality of the *stil nuovo*: the poet denies the role of author of his thoughts; this is not to say, however, that the poet fails to understand his poem's intended meaning.

36 "This love—namely, the union of my soul with this noble lady"; *Convivio* 3.2.9; 158.

37 "This noble lady, in which a good portion of the divine light shows itself to me"; ibid.

38 "The divine shows itself in the goodnesses of nature and reason"; *Convivio* 3.2.8, 157.

39 Lino Pertile's claim that what the Sweet New Style means for Dante is a poetry drawn "not from books but from the heart" does not match up at all with (and in fact betrays) Dante's real conception of the *stil nuovo* (Pertile, *La punta del disio: Semantica del desiderio nella "Commedia"* [Florence: Cadmo, 2005], 108). Arbitrarily grounding this misreading—as Pertile and (following him) Pirovano (*Il dolce stil novo*, 47–49) do—on the meaning of "sweetness" in a text of Victorine mystical theology is a misstep, since this ignores what "sweetness" means *for Dante* (namely, knowledge conveyed in the first instance by books—as we will see below).

40 *De vulgari eloquentia* 2.4.10; trans. Steven Botterill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 59.

41 Ibid., 2.4.11.

42 Dante's primary target in this part of *De vulgari eloquentia* is Guittone and his circle (which included Bonagiunta): "So let the devotees of ignorance cease to cry up Guittone d'Arezzo and others like him, for never, in either vocabulary or construction, have they been anything but commonplace"; Ibid., 2.6.8, 67.

43 *Convivio* 3.12.2–3, 225, emphases added: "By 'Love' I mean the study that I put in to *acquire* the love of this lady. Here one ought to know that study can be considered in two ways. One is the study that leads a man to possess the habit [*abito*] of an art or science; the other the study that he employs by making use of that habit once acquired [*acquisato*]. And the former of these is what I here call 'Love,' which formed in my mind continuous, new, and very lofty reflections on this lady who has been treated in the demonstration above." Dante is alluding to Avicenna's distinction between habitual and acquired intellect, which we will discuss in Part Three of this work. As we will see in Part Two and Part Four, Love for Cavalcanti frequently means, as it does for Dante here, the learning acquired through the study of philosophy.
44 Ibid., 2.15.1, 139–140, emphases added.
45 Ibid., 2.15.3–4, 140–141, emphases added.
46 As Antonello Borra (Guittone d'Arezzo, *Selected Poems and Prose* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017], 5) remarks, the "true differentiator between the poetry of the Sicilian and Guittonian schools on the one hand and that of Dante [and his circle] one the other . . . is one of substance and not of style."
47 Already in 1865 Francesco Perez (*La Beatrice svelata* [Palermo, 1865; reprint: Palermo, Flaccovio Editore, 2001]) was baffled by Dante scholarship's blindness to the obvious in its treatment of Dante's definition of the Sweet New Style. My view is consonant with Perez's thoroughly persuasive account (63–70), which shows along the way that this view is shared by the earliest commentators, including Dante's son Pietro. Astonishingly, Zygmunt G. Barański's relatively lengthy entry ("Dolce stil novo") in *The Dante Encyclopedia* (ed. Richard Lansing [New York: Garland, 2000], 308–311) does not mention philosophy—either the word or the concept—a single time. Indicating that Dante's view of the *dolce stil nuovo* is one of those questions for which "it is ultimately impossible to provide univocal and definitive interpretations" (311), Barański leans heavily toward treating it as a style in the ordinary sense—clarity of expression and harmony of form and content. But this entirely misses Dante's point.

Part Two
The Figure of Cavalcanti
Intimations of Heterodoxy

In his own lifetime and ever since, Guido Cavalcanti has been endowed with exceptional standing, not solely or even primarily as a poet but as a *figure*—one who arouses wonder, marvel, admiration, astonishment, suspicion, bewildered fascination.[1] As his posthumous fame grew in the Trecento, Guido was above all praised as an outstanding philosopher, although as far as we can tell he did not ever write philosophy in the usual sense. Benvento da Imola, in his commentary on *Commedia* (1375–1383), refers to "the two lights of Florence—the one [i.e., Cavalcanti] a philosopher, the other [i.e., Dante] a poet [*unus philosophus, alter poeta*]."[2] Dino Compagni, in his *Cronica* (ca. 1310), describes Cavalcanti as "noble and courageous but haughty and intent on study."[3] In his early Trecento *Nuova cronica* Giovanni Villani relates that Cavalcanti's death caused "great sorrow, because he was as a philosopher an excellent man in many regards, except that he was too sensitive and surly."[4] In the commentary on *Commedia* known as the Ottimo (1334) we are told that "one can say that Guido Cavalcanti was the first [poet] who fortified his *canzoni* with philosophical proofs, as is seen in his canzone that begins: *Donna me prega*."[5] An anonymous commentator, writing on *Inferno* in 1337, remarks that "Guido [Cavalcanti] was considered to be the most intelligent and the most noble man in Florence at that time."[6] Boccaccio remarks in his *Esposizioni* on *Commedia* (ca. 1373) that Cavalcanti was "reputed in his time to be an excellent logician and a good philosopher."[7] As exemplified by Boccaccio's interpretation of Dante's famous mention of Guido's *disdegno* in *Inferno* X ("but, since philosophy seemed to [Cavalcanti] to be—as it indeed is—much superior to poetry, he disdained Virgil and the other poets"[8]), the figure of Cavalcanti was "appropriated by the philosophers in order to underline his identity as a poet who had rejected literature in favor of *scientia*—this was, in fact, the most common image of Guido in the Trecento."[9] In his commentary on *Commedia* (ca. 1327) Guido da Pisa remarks that "this Guido [Cavalcanti] was great in knowledge [*scientia magnus*] and celebrated in character, but nevertheless somewhat puffed up as to his opinion of himself. For he despised the poetic discipline."[10] Certainly based on an interpretation of Dante's text rather

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than on anything written by Cavalcanti, this notion that Guido eventually gave up on poetry due to its limited intellectual scope and power still persists.[11]

Cavalcanti's fame, from the beginning, has been accompanied by intimations of heterodoxy and accusations that he was an atheist and a denier of the immortality of the human soul. The latter accusation is essentially true: Guido does (in keeping with most of the major Arabo-Islamic philosophers and their Jewish adherents in thirteenth-century Europe) deny that the human soul is by nature immortal; rather, it is *potentially* immortal—that potential only being actualized through philosophical study that might lead to the Conjunction with the Active Intellect. On the other hand, he was surely not an atheist: the systematic cosmologies of the Aristotelian rationalists would collapse without the First Cause—i.e., God.

The following sonnet by Bonagiunta da Lucca, which seems to have been addressed to Cavalcanti,[12] conveys the strong whiff of irreligion exuded by Guido's figure:

Con sicurtà dirò, po' ch'i' son vosso,
ciò ch'adivene di vossi dettati:
ch'i' 'nd'ho sonetti in quantità trovati
che di malvagi spiriti hanno adosso.
Per la pietà de' quali i' mi son mosso
ed a la nossa Donna gli ho menati
e con divozïon raccomandati,
e raccomando sempre quanto posso.
Ma non son certo perché s'adovegna
che per mei preghi partiti non sono,
se peccato non sia in lor che noce,
u perché mie preghiera non sie degna:
però vi prego, se 'nde fate alcuno
che li facciate il segno della croce.[13]

(Since I am your [friend], I will speak frankly [about] what happens with your compositions: for among them I have found a number of sonnets that are encumbered [*adosso*] with evil spirits. Out of compassion for them [i.e., for Cavalcanti's sonnets] I have taken action, and I have conveyed them to Our Lady and praised you with devotion—and I always praise you as much as I can. But I'm not certain why it transpires that despite my prayers they [i.e., the evil spirits] have not departed—unless perhaps the transgression that harms exists [in fact] in them [i.e., in the sonnets themselves]; or because my prayers are not [sufficiently] worthy: but I beg you, if you make any more [sonnets], that you make the sign of the cross to [bless] them.)

Bonagiunta opens by giving Guido the benefit of the doubt: the suspect sonnets are surrounded or afflicted by external evil spirits, the latter regarded as a covering that could be removed or an accoutrement that could be discarded. But the inefficacy of Bonagiunta's prayers to the Virgin raises the possibility that the sonnets themselves are intrinsically transgressive: the harmful spirits dwell within the sonnets themselves and cannot be dismissed easily. In the end Bonagiunta counsels good Christian practice as a possible remedy.

Whether or not in his lifetime Cavalcanti was considered dangerously heterodox, his posthumous reputation as a heretic was instituted by the famous episode in *Inferno* 10 where Dante appears to damn Guido to hell by proxy. There, in the circle reserved for heretics—defined by Virgil as "Epicurus and all his followers,/who say [*fanno*] that the soul dies with the body" (*Inf.* 10.14–15), Dante encounters Guido's father, Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti. Since *Comedy*'s narrative is meant to take place in the spring of 1300 and Guido died in August of that year, Dante was in this case not inclined to violate verisimilitude by situating his mentor in hell some time before his death. It is not unreasonable to view the father as a surrogate for the son; and (like father, like son) Dante thus would be portraying both as heretics for maintaining that the soul cannot survive the death of the body. This denial of an afterlife for humans is in fact one of the fundamental philosophical tenets that drives Guido's poetic project. Whether and in what aspect Dante attributes "Epicureanism" (an assignation that by the late Duecento had become a proverbial label for Radical Aristotelianism and its denial of the soul's immortality[14]) to his *primo amico* and condemns him for it—those questions will be treated in *Dante and the Salvation of Intellect*. But we should mention here that Dante, who is nothing if not precise and nuanced, does not denounce Epicureans for the *content* of their belief but denounces those among them who openly express that belief: the verb Dante uses to designate heretical action, *fanno*, clearly means "[they] say," "[they] speak." According to virtually all thinkers in the Arabo-Islamic rationalist tradition, publicizing philosophical truths is among the worst things that the philosopher can do. But Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti is not simply a stand-in for his son, since Dante shows the former as possessing a limited, overly physical understanding of things that Guido and Dante recognize to be metaphysical. In the brief conversation that focuses on Guido's absence from Dante's company, Cavalcante misconstrues Dante's use of a past tense verb to mean that Guido is dead. Cavalcante's agonized reply, packed with key words from Guido's lyric lexicon ("non viv' elli ancora?/non *fiere* li *occhi* suoi lo *dolce lume*?" ["Is he not still alive?/Does not the *sweet light strike* his *eyes*"; *Inf.* 10.68–69]),[15] betrays a merely superficial kinship with the thinking that drives Guido's stilnovism. Dante has Guido's father literalize the metaphorical language of his son's lyrics: Cavalcante speaks of the physical light of the physical Sun rather than,

as Guido does, speaking figurally of intellectual illumination from the Active Intellect. The irony continues as Dante employs the language of Conjunction: regretting having given Calvalcante the impression that Guido is dead, he asks Farinata to inform Guido's father "that his son is still conjoined [*congiunto*] with the living" ("che 'l suo nato è co' vivi ancor *congiunto*"; *Inf.* 10.111). The language of Conjunction, which Dante uses repeatedly throughout *Comedy* in the context of Radical Aristotelianism, is here invoked ironically: for the Arabo-Islamic and Jewish rationalists, the Conjunction with the Active Intellect (which is Salvation, the blissful afterlife) abstracts the philosopher from ordinary and literal human life, elevating him to an atemporal transhuman non-locus and amounting to the death of the individual human subject. (We will see in Part Four that matters involving the Conjunction are at the heart of Cavalcanti's poetic project.) Dante expects that Cavalcante will be happy to hear that his son is still "conjoined with the living," but this limited temporal conjunction is precisely the opposite of the atemporal destiny longed for by true believers in the religion of the philosophers. The target of Dante's irony here is Guido's father, not Guido, since the former shows no understanding of the latter's consuming drive toward metaphysics—a drive that entails an ethics anything but "Epicurean" in the usual modern sense. At any rate, the general thrust of Dante's allusions to Guido in *Inferno* 10 certainly situates his *primo amico* among the ranks of the heterodox rationalists—without necessarily, however, disassociating Dante himself from those ranks.

This figure of Cavalcanti as a philosopher with no concern to temper or reign in his thinking within the confines of Christian faith was cemented by the tale that Boccaccio devotes to Guido in the *Decameron*.[16] In certain obvious ways (for example, the setting among tombs and the designation of Guido as a suspected Epicurean) Boccaccio's portrait of Cavalcanti draws upon *Inferno* 10. Most importantly, it is concerned with the same question: who, really, is living and who is dead? The tale opens, in accordance with the accounts mentioned above, with a portrait of Cavalcanti as a preeminent philosopher and gentleman: "He was one of the world's best logicians [*migliori loici*] and an outstanding natural philosopher [*ottimo filosofo naturale*]"; "he was a most elegant, civilized, and eloquent man who could accomplish anything he wished, and he could do better than anyone else those things pertaining to the noble man—and, to boot, he was extremely wealthy."[17] Concerning Guido's reputation as an aspiring atheist (a reputation perhaps invented by Boccaccio), we are told the following:

> Guido *alcuna volta speculando* molto *abstratto dagli uomini divenia*; e per ciò che egli alquanto tenea della oppinione degli *epicuri*, si diceva tralla gente volgare che queste sue *speculazioni* erano solo in *cercare se trovar si potesse* che Iddio non fosse.[18]

> (*Sometimes*, [while] *speculating*, Guido *became very abstracted from humans*; and because he leaned toward the opinion of the Epicureans, it was rumored among the common folk that his *speculations* consisted solely in *seeking [to know] if one could find out that* God does not exist.)

Boccaccio, whose immersion in the Averroist tradition is considerable,[19] subtly displays his own advanced understanding while showing the ignorance of ordinary people. For one thing, in the Aristotelian rationalist tradition speculation is virtually synonymous with fully achieved abstraction: *speculatio* [= *theoria*] is the intellectual vision of the intelligible form of an entity; in the case of natural science (Guido's specialty, Boccaccio has told us), this requires the abstracting (removing, stripping away) of all traces or vestiges of the entity's materiality. So, it is no accident that *speculando* and *abstratto* are conjoined in Boccaccio's text. Second, successfully achieving a sufficient number of such abstractions makes one become other than human—such that one is abstracted or removed from humankind's ontological level of being and elevated to a superhuman level; hence, Boccaccio says that in speculating Cavalcanti "became abstracted from humans" (*abstratto dagli uomini divenia*). Third, for many of the philosophers this elevated status is not granted permanently but is maintained only while one is actually intellecting—now and then but not always; hence, Boccaccio tells us that Guido's abstraction from humankind only happened sometimes (*alcuna volta*). After indicating Cavalcanti's at least partial adherence to the teachings of the Radical Aristotelians (Epicureans), Boccaccio then indicates how far the vulgar masses are from understanding the project of philosophy: they confuse it with the search for a foundation for atheism. And their notion of speculation is most remote from the philosophical notion: for them, it is a *seeking* to know; for the philosophers, it is the very act of knowing/seeing. Boccaccio heightens this gap between the vulgar notion of speculation as searching yet not finding and the philosophers' notion of *speculatio/theoria* as the endpoint, the very goal, of searching: the vulgar think that the philosopher's speculation is a seeking to know not the thing itself (in this case, God's nonexistence) but rather a seeking to know if it is possible to know the thing itself (*cercare se trovar si potesse che*). For the common crowd, there are veils of mediation separating speculation from the object of knowledge. This is the modern notion of a "theory" as an unproven and thus debatable proposition, a subjective conjecture—i.e., as "mere speculation." But in fact, in the Aristotelian tradition, *speculatio/theoria* is not only unmediated intellection of the thing itself—more than that, it is the identity of the knower and the known.

There is no need to recount the narrative of this brief tale here. Suffice it to say that a band of aristocrats who relish an Epicurean (in the modern sense of hedonist) lifestyle, slighted by Guido's refusal to join their ranks, comes upon him one day near a church cemetery and decides to

menace him by violently charging toward him on horseback. The leader of this brigade, a certain Messer Betto Brunelleschi, taunts Guido by asking him, "Guido, you refuse to be of our company; but look, when you will have found that God is not, what will you have accomplished?" Guido immediately launches at them a sharp but subtle insult and then, leaping over a sepulchre, escapes:

> Guido, seeing himself hemmed in by them, answered promptly: "Gentlemen, in your own house you may say to me what you please" [*Signori, voi mi potete dire a casa vostra ciò che vi piace*]; then, laying his hand on one of those great tombs and being very nimble, he leaped up and landed on the other side, and he made off, having thus rid himself of them.
>
> The gentlemen remained behind looking at each other and started saying that he was out of his mind [*smemorato*] and that what he had said to them amounted to nothing, seeing that there where they were [i.e., the cemetery] pertained no more to them than to all the citizens, nor any less to Guido than to any of themselves. But Messer Betto turned to them and said, "It is you who are mentally deficient [*smemorati*], if you have not understood him. He has courteously and in a few words given us the sharpest rebuke in the world; for, if you consider it well, these tombs are the houses of the dead, seeing that the dead are laid and dwell in them—and these, he says, are our house, meaning thus to show us that we and other ignorant and unlettered men [*uomini idioti e non litterati*] are, compared with him and other men of learning [*uomini scienziati*], worse than dead people—and so, being here, we are in our own house." Thereupon each understood what Guido had meant to say and was ashamed and never bothered him again, and they considered Messer Betto thenceforth a subtle [*sottile*] and intelligent gentleman.[20]

On an important level, Boccaccio's tale is figural: it is an allegory, meant to answer the question posed above ("Who, really, is living and who is dead?") and the related question, "How can humans overcome the inevitability of the tomb?"

The commonsense view of the *idioti* and *non litterati* who cannot understand Guido's subtle remark is that all humans will die: the universality of death allows for no distinctions, and the tomb pertains equally to all humans. Ironically, while one of the persistent themes of Cavalcanti's lyric corpus is the inevitability of death for humans, here it is the vulgar crowd who espouse that position without reflection. Indeed, Cavalcanti's poetry does insist that all humans are mortal—and he goes much farther than the *idioti* by denying the possibility of dying a Christian death, a death followed by resurrection. But at the same time, as an Averroist, he is familiar with a hopeful alternative, the optimist view

on the possibility of the Salvation of Intellect: only the philosopher can possibly escape death; and he can only do so by philosophizing to such a degree that he attains Conjunction with the Active Intellect. Hence, in the confines of the tale, only Guido surpasses the tomb. And Cavalcanti's pessimist view that the Salvation of Intellect is impossible nonetheless allows for a distinction between the living and the dead that is not merely factual and trivial: while it is true that everyone does die, the "life" that really matters does not mean life, and "death" does not mean death. Rather, through study and intellectual effort, humans who acquire knowledge in the arts and sciences (*uomini scienziati*), people of letters, may enjoy some degree of connection—if only temporarily—with the realm of eternal realities. As Siger of Brabant, one of the leading Radical Aristotelians at Paris in the age of Aquinas, says: *cum vivere sine litteris mors sit et vivi hominis sepultura* ("For to live without letters is death and is the grave of living men").[21] Messer Betto distinguishes himself from the *idioti* and approaches Guido's status—if not especially closely—insofar as he understands the *figural* aspect of discourse: there is both a literal and a metaphorical way to be "alive" or "dead." It is important to insist that Cavalcanti's lyrics cannot be understood without an attunement to figurality: "Love" does not mean love, and "the Lady" does not mean the lady. The principle that Love is not love applies even to the apparently thoroughly literal discourse of *Donna me prega*, a canzone which, despite its reputation, is not primarily a poem about love.

Dante seldom misses an opportunity to disparage Guittone d'Arezzo, while he has nothing but praise for Guinizelli.[22] In casting Guittone as the archenemy of good poetry and Guinizelli as its hero, Dante develops a scheme that already had been deployed by Cavalcanti, who was the latter's first great champion and the former's most explicitly dismissive detractor.[23] Cavalcanti, for his part, exploits a perceptible tension between the two poets, intensifying the critique of Guittone that Guinizelli had himself initiated. With his sonnet *Da più a uno face un sollegismo*, Cavalcanti mercilessly dismantles Guittone's authority in ways that will help us grasp Boccaccio's characterization of Guido's heterodoxy. But before turning to that sonnet, it will be helpful to linger a while on the entertaining literary sparring between the Tuscan master and the Bolognese.

Although it is often difficult to establish with certainty the chronology of the composition of individual medieval Italian lyric poems in relation to others, it is plausible to regard the following sonnet,[24] in which Guittone reproaches Guinizelli for the fact that the latter's verse is marred by an "unseemly error," as the opening volley in the literary battle between the two poets:

> S'eo tale fosse, ch'io potesse stare
> sanza riprender me, riprenditore,
> credo farebbi alcun om amendare

4 certo, a lo mio parer, d'un laido errore;
che, quando vol la sua donna laudare,
la dice ched è bella come fiore,
e ch'è di gemma o ver di stella pare,
8 e che 'n viso di grana ave colore.
Or tal è pregio per donna avanzare,
ched a ragione maggio è d'ogni cosa
11 che l'omo pote vedere o toccare?
Ché natura né far pote né osa
fattura alcuna né maggior né pare,
14 for che d'alquanto l'om maggior si cosa.[25]

(If I were such that I could criticize [another poet] without [thereby] criticizing myself, I think I would certainly correct a certain someone for what seems to me an unseemly error. For, when he wants to praise his lady, he says that she is as beautiful as a flower, and that she is the equal of a gemstone or even a star, and that her face is the color of pomegranate/crimson [*grana*]. Now, is this the kind of worth meant to elevate a lady, who is truly [*a ragione*] greater than anything that man might see or touch? For nature could not nor dares not create any creature superior or equal [to women]—except that men are said to be somewhat superior.)

The sonnet opens with a mode of irony—specifically, with the deployment of the rhetorical figure *dubitatio* (pretending to doubt that one can or should do something that one then goes on to do): Guittone doubts that he could castigate another poet ("a certain someone") without implicating himself in the commission of the same error, and he indicates that he will thus not do so; yet with this sonnet he does precisely that. His confession to the commission of that error is rhetorical as well, since he obliquely implies that Guinizelli's poetry is similar to his own, with the suggestions that he himself is the model that other poets follow and that Guinizelli is derivative. The "unseemly error" in question involves the status of the entities to which (says Guittone) Guinizelli compares his lady: she is beautiful like a "flower"; she is the equal of a "gemstone" or even a "star"; the color of her face (her rosy cheeks) resembles the color of a "pomegranate." Each of these similitudes may be found in one or the other of the two sonnets (*Vedut'ho la lucente stella diana* and *Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare*) that, along with the canzone *Al cor gentil* (discussed in Part One), comprise the very small corpus of Guinizelli's proto-stilnovist poetry.[26] The substance of the complaint leveled by Guittone is that Guinizelli disrespects his lady's ontological status—that he humiliates her by comparing her to nonhuman created things: flowers, gemstones, stars, pomegranates. Since humankind is at the apex of the hierarchy of created natural beings, comparing a woman to a

pomegranate or treating her as the equal of a mineral is a degradation. But then Guittone himself cannot refrain from degrading women: he qualifies his remarks by reminding us that men are ontologically superior to women. Consciously or otherwise, Guittone commits the "unseemly error" of dispraising while aiming to praise women; given that he can be tremendously ironic, it is quite possible that he does so on purpose—thus proving his initial avowal that he himself cannot be exempt from the criticism that he will aim toward Guinizelli.

Whatever may be the merits of Guittone's sonnet as a discourse on poetic style, an expression of a worldview, or as literary entertainment, it amounts to either a poor misreading or a deliberate distortion of Guinizelli's purpose, especially as exemplified in the sonnet *Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare*, likely the chief object of Guittone's reproach.

Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare
ed asembrarli la rosa e lo giglio:
più che stella dïana splende e pare,
e ciò ch'è lassù bello a lei somiglio.
verde river' a lei rasembro e l'âre
tutti color di fior', giano e vermiglio,
oro ed azzurro e ricche gioi per dare:
medesmo Amor per lei rafina meglio.
Passa per via adorna, e sì gentile
ch'abassa orgoglio a cui dona salute,
e fa 'l de nostra fé se non la crede;
e no·lle pò apressare om che sia vile;
ancor ve dirò c'ha maggior vertute:
null'om pò mal pensar fin che la vede.[27]

(I wish truly to praise my lady and compare the rose and the lily to her: she shines and shows herself [*pare*] more than the morning star [*stella dïana*: the planet Venus], and I compare what is beautiful up there [in the heavens] to her. I compare the green field and the air to her, all colors of flowers, yellow and vermillion, [and] gold and lapis lazuli and precious jewels to bestow: even Love becomes better [or, "refines better": *rafina*] through her. She passes, beautiful, through the street, and [is] so noble that she tempers the pride of those whom she greets [or, saves: *salute*], and makes one [join] our faith if he does not believe [in] it; and an ignoble man cannot approach her; I will tell you that she has an even greater power: no one can think badly as long as he sees her.)

Here we have everything but the pomegranate: the flowers ("the rose and the lily"; "all colors of flowers"); the gemstones ("gold and lapis lazuli and precious jewels"); the stars ("stella dïana"; "what is beautiful

up there [in the heavens]"). Guittone criticizes Guinizelli for comparing his lady to these and other such created nonhuman entities. In truth Guinizelli does just the reverse: he compares such entities *to her* ("I wish to compare the rose and lily to her"; "I compare what is beautiful in the heavens to her"; "I compare the green field, etc. to her"). The sonnet's novelty is precisely this inversion of the usual position of the terms of comparison: rather than "my lady is like the ____," Guinizelli proclaims that "the ____ is like my lady": she is the supreme model, the higher reality of which all these other things are similitudes or semblances. Guittone complains that Guinizelli has insulted, ontologically, his lady; but a fair reading of the latter's sonnet shows that there is no visible creature so ontologically elevated as she. Guittone claims that Guinizelli says she is "the equal [*pare*] of a star" (*di stella pare*; line 7); but in truth Guinizelli says she shines and glitters (*pare*) more than a star (*più che stella dïana splende e pare*) and that her beauty excels that of all the visible heavenly bodies (lines 2–3). As a light that surpasses the lights we can see in the heavens above, she is a metaphysical light—an Intelligence. The various created entities (the rose, the green field, gold, etc.) are similitudes of her: they present traces of her being, the metaphysical light that informs all created entities. She is the *Dator Formarum* ("Giver of Forms")—the Active Intellect. Only thus can we explain the ethical turn that happens in line 8, which results in a sonnet whose underlying scheme does not match the usual division into octave (the first eight lines) and sestet (the remaining six lines): here the first seven verses focus on the physical world, while the latter seven revolve around ethics. The verse in which this ethical turn happens (line 8) is fittingly that which treats the refining power of Love—here a synonym for the rational ethical faculty. Guittone's critique has to ignore the second half of the sonnet because lines 8–14 can hardly be construed as dispraising the lady: she refines ethically (line 8) and scientifically (it is impossible for one who is seeing her to err epistemologically: line 14), and she gives salvation (*salute*) to those necessarily noble humans who are able to approach her (lines 10–12). Her power to turn those whom she greets to the right belief (*fa 'l de nostra fé se non la crede*; line 11) is exceeded by a greater power (*maggior vertute*): she makes actual the potential to think correctly possessed by those who see her (*null'om pò mal pensar che la vede*; line 14). Reflecting the superiority of the life of *theoria* to the life of *praxis* (a view grounded in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*), Guinizelli presents thinking (reasoning that yields knowledge with absolute certainty of objects of theory—i.e., science) as a higher power than the practical (ethical) faculty, which must rely upon the only relative and contingent probability provided by belief or opinion (the "faith" of line 11). Noticeably, the specific identity of "our faith" (*nostra fé*) is left indeterminate; although the vast majority of readers will take this to mean Christianity, there is nothing to preclude the possibility—especially given that the sonnet

clearly ranks thinking/knowing (*pensar*) higher than belief (*crede*) and faith (*fé*)—that Guinizelli identifies himself as a member of that small congregation who profess the religion of the philosophers. Those of his faith are an elite intellectual nobility able to achieve what the vulgar masses are not (a distinction summed up by the rhymed adjectives *gentile* [line 9] and *vile* [line 12]): they enjoy the reward that consists in the vision (*la vede*: one "sees her") granted to those who worship God via the mediation of the Active Intellect. Regardless of the identity of line 11's "faith," the verse is meant to activate the double sense of *salute*, since what is at first her "greeting" (*salute*) those noble ones whom she passes on the street (thus tempering their pride because they recognize her ontological superiority) immediately turns into her saving those worthy of such salvation (*salute*). This salvation begins with an ethical refinement that sets the believer on the right path of *praxis*—the path that leads to theoretical science; and, ultimately, thinking (certain knowledge) supplants and surpasses mere belief. It is remarkable how much of Cavalcanti's stilnovist project is subtly condensed into this one sonnet, and we can see why Cavalcanti led the cry in advancing Guinizelli's standing as a master poet. Remarkable as well is that the sonnet appears as nothing less than an embryonic form of Dante's project in *Comedy*, where Beatrice confers upon a happy few the power of surpassing belief or opinion (faith) and attaining salvation in the mode of theoretical science of the reality of the cosmos. And, far from devaluing the lady, Guinizelli elevates her to such a degree that she is no longer a lady but is an angel of *theoria*, an Intelligence (the Active Intellect), above humankind (whether male or female) and above the celestial spheres (the heavenly bodies and their celestial souls [the "active angels" or angels of *praxis*]).[28] Guittone, intentionally or not, has glossed over the real philosophical import of his rival's sonnet, instead leveling a superficial charge against what is in truth an intellectually sophisticated and precise discourse.

Guittone presents the opinion he offers in his sonnet's sestet—that women are the ontologically highest of all created beings, except for men, who are somewhat superior—as an opinion that is right, reasonable, and true: one who holds this opinion does so "with reason," *a ragione* (line 10). The view that men are superior to women (*d'alquanto l'om maggior si cosa*; "men are said to be somewhat superior"; line 14), which functions as the sonnet's conclusion, is said to be a rational opinion. But on what grounds does Guittone form and hold this opinion? He tells us in the sonnet's final words: *si cosa*. The verb here (which is in the passive voice) is *cosare*, meaning "to call," "to consider [as]," "to declare."[29] Man "is called" (considered, declared to be) superior to woman. By whom? By no one in particular, but rather by the indefinite "they": "they say" that women are inferior to men. (We could hazard some guesses: perhaps Guittone picked up this commonly held belief from his exposure to biblical or patristic texts, or from teachings delivered from the pulpit

or taught in cathedral schools, or simply from listening to people around him.) The foundation of the view that Guittone touts as a rational opinion is hearsay. But according to the tenets of Arabo-Aristotelian logic, there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as rational opinion. Reasoning that yields knowledge with demonstrative certainty and not susceptible to any doubt is precisely what leads the thinker to rise above the realm of opinion/belief—to put what "they say" to the test and to pass beyond it if need be. Although the "they say"—referred to in the Latin translation of Avicenna's *The Healing* as "much talked of" accounts (*famosis*) and belief according to "received opinions" (*ex auctoritatibus*)—has some probative value in matters of *praxis* (matters to which true or false does not pertain), it has no place at all in matters of truth (the realm of *theoria* or science), which are known solely by adherence to reason (*ragione*).[30] In fact the whole point of philosophy is to free oneself, when it comes to determining truth, from the necessity of relying on others, on the "they." The truth concerning the measure of the ontological status of women in comparison to that of men is a matter of scientific truth, not opinion. The Arabic rationalists (Averroes and Maimonides, for example) insisted that reasoning tells us that women and men are intellectually and essentially (ontologically) equal.[31] In concluding *S'eo tale fosse, ch'io potesse stare* by asserting that men are somewhat superior to women, Guittone is passing off what is commonly said (*si cosa*; line 14) as if it had been ascertained by reason (*a ragione*; line 10): he is a purveyor of opinion (belief, faith) rather than a provider of truth. As we shall see, Cavalcanti's devastating obliteration (in his sonnet *Da più a uno face un sollegismo*) of Guittone's authority will follow along these lines: Guittone is mocked as a philosophically uniformed intellectual dilettante who deals in counterfeit goods rather than the real thing.

Despite—or, more probably because of—this provocation by the famous Tuscan master, Guinizelli addresses a sonnet (*O caro padre meo, de vostra laude*) to Guittone, praising him as his literary father and soliciting his assistance in editing an unnamed canzone. Guittone's sonnet in reply (*Figlio mio dilettoso, in faccia laude*) establishes this pair of poems as a fascinating *tenzone*, a *tour de force* on the part of both poets that displays several notable characteristics of some of the best lyrics of the Tuscan school: remarkable technical ingenuity; linguistic obscurity (which still puzzles modern scholars, leaving much that is open to interpretation); considerable irony, often achieved through willful polysemy; intertextuality, often in the mode of mimicry at the service of competitive rivalry; poetry as the forum for the poets' conversations about poetry with other poets.

At first sight Guinizelli's *O caro padre meo, de vostra laude* appears as a poem in which Guinizelli, assuming the position of a humble apprentice petitioning his master, praises Guittone for his exemplary moral conduct and literary virtuosity. Recent scholarship, in accord with Paolo

Borsa's brilliantly revelatory exposition of the *tenzone*, has recognized that Guinizelli is in fact playing a game of double-speak, offering a sonnet with two coherent but diametrically opposed messages: one that lauds Guittone, another that brutally attacks him.[32] Guittone, for his part, responds in kind, with a sonnet that can be read as politely amicable or as aggressively dismissive.

In addressing Guittone, Guinizelli was taking the chance—along with the risk—of putting himself forth as an interlocutor worthy of the attention of a contemporary poet of unrivaled preeminence.[33] A key point to bear in mind is that Guittone's public image as well as the development and organization of his poetic corpus was grounded in one central event: his conversion that resulted in his joining a religious order (the *Milites Beatae Virginis Mariae*) and renouncing his profane, courtly, often bawdy, and playful style in favor of poetry devoted to the worship of God and the preaching of Christian morality. The manuscript tradition divides his poetry as if it were in effect authored by two different people: the pre-conversion "Guittone" and the post-conversion "Frate ['Friar'] Guittone").[34] As we will see, Guittone's self-presentation as a teacher of ethical virtue and a moralizing Christian writer is the target of Guinizelli's criticism and, especially, of Cavalcanti's effort to dismantle his authority entirely; for Cavalcanti, Guittone is the leader of the enemy in what amounts to cultural warfare between philosophical thinking and religious rhetoric. At any rate, there was considerable audacity in Guinizelli's sending Guittone this sonnet:

O caro padre meo, de vostra laude
non bisogna ch'alcun omo se' 'mbarchi,
ché 'n vostra mente intrar vizio non aude,
che for de sé vostro saver non l'archi:
a ciascun rëo[,] sì la porte claude,
che sembr' a più via che Venezi' à Marchi;
entr' a' Gaudenti ben vostr' alma gaude,
ch'al me' parer li gaudii àn sovralarchi.
Prendete la canzon, la qual io porgo
al saver vostro, che l'aguinchi e cimi,
ch'a voi ciò solo com' a mastr' accorgo.
ch'ell' è congiunta certo a debel' [or: *de bel*] vimi:
però mirate di lei ciascun borgo
per vostra corezzion lo vizio limi.

Before presenting two radically divergent translations of the poem, let us mention three noteworthy items. First, Guinizelli's addressing Guittone as *caro padre meo* ("my dear father") affiliates this sonnet with the whole question concerning the *dolce stil nuovo*, since Dante is surely gesturing toward this verse when, in distinguishing the modern from the

outmoded style, he addresses Guinizelli as *il padre mio* (*Purg.* 26.97–98, discussed above, Part One): the true father is Guinizelli, and Guittone is left out in the cold. Insofar as Guinizelli may be sincerely respectful (on the surface at least) in calling Guittone "father," this is not the respect shown by a youth to an elder (Guinizelli was likely a few years older than Guittone) but that of an aspiring poet to the influential source of his inspiration. The second item of note is the display of technical ingenuity, as the sonnet throughout employs a highly limited set of rhymes: a single pair of syntagms (*aude* and *archi*) in the octave and another (*orgo* and *imi*) in the sestet. While perhaps not a parody, this is at least an imitation of the sort of verbal acrobatics that marks much of Guittone's poetry. The third item is another instance of mimicry: lines 7–8, with its three variations of *gaude* ("entr' a' *Gaudenti* ben vostr' alma *gaude*,/ch'al me' parer li *gaudii* àn sovralarchi"), point directly at the tenth verse of one of the poems in which Guittone's formalism is at its most extreme—a sonnet in which each verse contains four variations of a key lexeme.[35]

Read as a sincere poem in praise of Guittone, Guinizelli's sonnet may be translated as follows:

> O my dear father, it is not necessary that anyone undertake the task of praising you, since vice does not dare enter your mind without your wisdom shooting it out of you [i.e., expelling it]. In this way it shuts the door to all evils, which seem to have more ways [of entry] than Venice has Marks [*Marchi*]; your soul is very joyful [*gaude*] among the Joyous Friars [*Gaudenti*], who seem to me to have very abundant joys [*gaudii*]. Take the canzone, that I entrust to your wisdom, so that you might take it [grasp/seize] and prune ["trim": *cimare*] it, because I reckon that you alone, as a master, are up for the task; for it is certainly held together with weak bindings—and take care to examine each of its parts and eliminate its flaws through your correction.

This straightforward homage requires little exposition.[36] "Marks" (*Marchi*) here means males named "Mark," of whom there are a great many in the city that honored the apostle Mark as its patron saint; Guittone's moral excellence is such that he repels all manners of evil, of which there are an even greater number. The Joyous Friars (*Gaudenti*) was the popular name for the *Milites Beatae Virginis Mariae*, the religious order that Guittone had joined, thus becoming Frate Guittone. Guinizelli humbly confesses that the canzone he has sent to Guittone along with this sonnet has weaknesses, and he asks for assistance from the one poet who could accomplish a masterful revision.

Read ironically, the sonnet assumes a much different aspect. Guinizelli accuses Guittone of hypocrisy, avarice, hedonism, and promiscuity, and rather than asking the master poet to help him improve his poetry,

he himself offers a poem aiming to correct Guittone so that the latter will think and act more wisely:

> O my dear "father," no one should burden himself with the challenge of praising you, saying that vice dare not enter your mind without your expelling it. You wrongfully bolt up the door on everyone [i.e., lock everyone out], so that it seems that you possess even more marks [*marchi*, i.e., gold coins] than there are in Venice. Your soul is indeed enjoying itself [*gaude*] among the Jovial Friars [*Gaudenti*], who it seems to me enjoy excessive jollities [*gaudii*]. Take the canzone (which is certainly held together with fine bindings) that I offer to your wisdom so that [the canzone] might emend and direct [your wisdom]—for it is only this [i.e., your wisdom] that I am correcting, since you are a "maestro" [i.e., a master of formal poetic technique]; for this reason, make sure that all of its parts eliminate your vice and correct you.

No one should waste his effort praising Guittone's moral rectitude, since Guittone is susceptible to several vices; for instance, he hoards money and lacks generosity. Fraternizing with the Jovial Friars, he partakes of their hypocrisy, greed, notoriously irreligious lifestyle and license to enjoy immoderate worldly pleasures.[37] Mentioning the *Gaudenti*, Guinizelli activates the ironic force of his calling Guittone *padre* in the sonnet's opening verse: as a lay member of the order, Guittone was not a full-fledged friar (not Frate Guittone) and thus was permitted to remain married and to father children (as Padre Guittone): while benefitting from the privileges of membership in the order (such as exemption from taxes), he could still enjoy the pleasures involved in procreation.[38] Guinizelli's finely fabricated canzone is in no need of revision, and it is sent with the hope that it might help reform Guittone's moral judgment, since as a master of formal literary artisanship, Guittone is in no need of a writing lesson.

Guittone, recognizing Guinizelli's duplicity, responds in kind with a sonnet that can be read in two contrary ways:[39]

Figlio mio dilettoso, in faccia laude
non con discrezïon, sembrame, m'archi [or: *sembra, me' marchi*]:
lauda sua volenter non saggio l'aude,
se tutto laudator giusto ben marchi;
per che laudar·te te non cor me' l'aude,
tutto che laude merti e laude marchi:
laudando sparte bon de valor laude,
legge orrando di saggi e non di marchi.
Ma se che degno sia figlio m'acorgo;

no amo certo guaire a ·tte dicimi,
11 ché volonteri a la tua lauda accorgo;
la grazia tüa che 'padre' dicimi,
che figl' ò tale assai pago, corgo,
14 purché vera sapienza a·ppoder cimi.

Translation 1:
My beloved son, it seems to me that you shoot praise my way indiscreetly; the wise man does not listen with pleasure to his praise [i.e., to the words of those who praise him], even when the one who praises hits right on the mark; this is why my heart does not encourage me to praise you, although you merit praise and achieve praise: praise, in praising, splits off the good from virtue, according to the law of the wise and not of fools. But if I confess that you are a worthy son, [this is because] I do not desire by any means to belittle you, and so with pleasure I hasten to praise you. I welcome your kindness in calling me "father," quite satisfied that I have such a son—provided that, to the extent that you are able, you cultivate true wisdom.

Translation 2:
My amusing [or: silly] son, cheekily and without discretion you praise—it seems—my money ["my marks": gold coins]. Only a person who is not wise listens with pleasure to words that praise him, even when the one who praises is right on the mark; this is why my mind is not so reckless as to praise you, although you "praise" [i.e., condemn] my merits and my money: in "praising," your "praise" splits off the [material] good from the virtue [that obtains it], [and here I speak as one who is] honoring the law of the wise and not that of money. But even if I realize that you are a worthy son, I certainly do not wish not to correct you, so willingly in reply to your praise I will correct you; I welcome your kindness in calling me "father," quite satisfied that I have such a son—provided that, to the extent that you are able, you cultivate true wisdom.

Judged as literary gamesmanship, Guittone is clearly the winner: his feat displays a greater degree of difficulty, as he takes Guinizelli's rhymes a step further by making them equivocal: each verse in the octave ends with *laude* and *marchi*, and the tercet's *corgo* and *cimi* are manifestly more restrictive than Guinizelli's *orgo* and *imi*; moreover, the key word *laudare* (recall that the war between the two poets began with Guittone's attack against Guinizelli's *Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare* and that the final word of the first verse in both sonnets of this *tenzone* is *laude*) appears 11 times (as either *lauda* or *laude*).[40] Taken at face value, Guittone's reply treats Guinizelli's sonnet as a sincere expression

of praise, while making no mention of Guinizelli's request for help revising the canzone. He gently chides his "beloved son," offering a moral lesson: the wise person does not welcome praise of his virtue, since true virtue is pursued for its own sake, not for the sake of one's reputation. For this reason, Guittone will refrain from praising Guinizelli, although (like Guittone himself) he is quite worthy of praise. To confirm that he regards his "worthy son" as praiseworthy, in the sestet he commends Guinizelli for his kindness in treating him respectfully as a patriarch, encouraging him to make every effort to always follow the path of wisdom. Taken ironically, Guittone's reply belittles Guinizelli as an "amusing" or "silly" son and recognizes that Guinizelli's apparent "praise" was in fact an impudent accusation of avarice. Here an additional moral lesson is offered: money per se is not to be condemned, since it may be acquired virtuously (and, presumably, put to virtuous use). In this reading, Guittone's reply closes with faint praise: he will welcome Guinizelli as his "son" provided that he "cultivate *true* wisdom": the Christian wisdom of Frate Guittone not the university wisdom of Bologna—at the same time calling into question Guinizelli's willingness or ability to do so ("to the extent that you are able").

Cavalcanti's sonnet *Da più a uno face un sollegismo* is a frontal attack on Guittone's qualifications as a thinker, reducing him to an object of ridicule incapable of providing teachings that anyone might take seriously; Guittone does not know how to philosophize properly and so should refrain from purporting to offer true propositions:[41]

Da più a uno face un sollegismo:
in maggiore e in minor mezzo si pone,
che pruova necessario sanza rismo;
da ciò ti parti fors', e di ragione?
Nel profferer, che cade'n barbarismo,
difetto di saver ti dà cagione;
e come far poteresti un sofismo
per silabate carte, fra' Guittone?
Per te non fu giammai una figura;
non fori ha posto il tuo un argomento;
induri, quando più dissi: "E pon' cura"!:
ché 'ntes' ho che compon' d'insegnamento
volume: e fòr principio ha da natura.
Fa ch' om non rida il tuo proponimento![42]

(Proceeding] from more [than one] to one makes a syllogism: [a] middle [term] is positioned in both [a] major [premise] and [a] minor [premise], [and] that proves [a] necessary [truth] without [a] definition; do you perchance depart from this [practice] and from reason [i.e., from the rational method]? Is your defect in knowledge

> the cause of your setting forth [things] that are marred by [logical] barbarisms? And [so] how could you make even a sophistical [or: "a logically sophisticated"] argument in written verses [*per silibate carte*: "through syllabized pages"—i.e., written language that can be scanned], Frate Guittone? You have never [constructed] a [logical] figure. Your [work] has never produced a [demonstrative] argument. And the more I have said [to you], "Be careful! [i.e., pay attention to the proper methods of logical reasoning]," [the more] you obstinately persist [*induri*, "you harden," "you (become) obdurate"]: for I have heard that you are composing a volume of teachings, and its principles/premises are not grounded in nature. Make sure that people don't laugh at your proposition[s]!)

Lines 1–3 describe the main features and function of the logical syllogism: a major premise and a minor premise, sharing a middle term, demonstrate the necessary truth of a conclusion; the syllogism does need to deploy or yield a definition (i.e., the essential form or quiddity of the subject under consideration).[43] From three elements ("more than one": the major, the minor, and the middle term), there results a single conclusion: "a syllogism makes one out of more than one").[44] Line 3's *rismo*, which (in keeping with the terminology drawn from logic that runs throughout the sonnet) I have translated "definition," has provoked at least three quite different interpretations: *rismo* as "rhyme" or "verse," in which case Cavalcanti would be saying that a syllogism is not or does not need to be expressed in poetry; *arismo* as "number," either with, again, the sense of "verse" or with the implication that a syllogism's validity is self-sustaining and does not need to be verified by the opinions of numerous authorities; *rismo* as *orismo*, from Aristotle's Greek word for the logical term "definition" (*horismos*).[45] Each of these possibilities is problematic. It makes no sense to think that Cavalcanti would insist that syllogistic discourse does not need rhyme, since no one has or ever would claim that it does; nor does it makes sense to think that Cavalcanti is saying that rhyme somehow impedes logical discourse, since his own practice in this very poem (not to mention in *Donna me prega*!) proves otherwise.[46] Although Cavalcanti would certainly maintain that demonstrative certainty is provided by syllogisms in themselves, regardless of the beliefs of numerous people (and, as we will see below, he does seem to target Guittone as one who presents hearsay or the opinions of authorities as if it were true knowledge), reading *arismo* (as in "arithmetic") to mean "numerous authorities" is an extrapolation not supported by the text.[47] "Definition" (*orismo*) makes perfect—absolutely perfect—sense philosophically, although the philological evidence for the possible existence of this word in Italian is somewhat flimsy.[48] In Aristotelian logic, a "definition" states the essence or quiddity of a thing ("what it is"), while a demonstration—syllogism being the kind of

demonstration that provides necessary truth, scientific certainty—states that something is or is not truly predicated of some subject ("that this is or is not true of that").[49] Syllogisms can yield necessary demonstrative truth without involving or depending on a definition: the famous exemplary syllogism—"All humans are mortal; Socrates is a human; thus Socrates is mortal"—tells us something true about Socrates, but it accomplishes this without a definition (of the essence of the human species: "rational animal"). In fact, Aristotle explicitly states that a demonstrative syllogism accomplishes its work without need of—in order to make the proposition "necessary" (see *necessario*, line 3)—a "further term" (e.g., a definition).[50] So, as Cavalcanti says in line 3, a syllogism "proves what is necessarily true [or: "proves the necessary"] without a definition."[51] The middle term (*mezzo*; line 2) is no afterthought but rather is the primary *desideratum* of demonstrative reasoning. (Avicenna, as we will see in Part Three, regards the whole point of philosophy as finding middle terms.) More than trying to prove a conclusion, the logician's effort lies in seeking the middle term, because finding it amounts to understanding the cause or reason for something being the case; it does not indicate *what* something is—that is the task of the definition—but proves *why* it is such as it is. The middle term is not itself a proposition but is that element shared by two propositions, the major premise and the minor premise. Thus Cavalcanti says that a middle term is positioned *in* the major premise and *in* the minor premise (not between them): "*in* maggiore e *in* minor mezzo si pone" (line 2).[52] In the case of the Socrates syllogism, the middle term is "being human." What is the reason for the truth of the conclusion? Why is Socrates mortal? Socrates is mortal *because he is human*. The first quatrain gives a precise and technically accurate account of the demonstrative syllogism (the only method by which humans attain necessarily true scientific knowledge) and then, with a rhetorical question ("Do you perchance depart from this practice and from reason?"; line 4), accuses Guittone of not following this method.

Lines 5–8 provide Cavalcanti's explanation for Guittone's departure from the rational method: Guittone lacks "knowledge" (*saver*; line 6; there is an ironic note here, since the word appears more than 80 times in the works of Guittone, who prided himself on and was widely recognized as possessing preeminent *saver*), and Guittone's attempts to support his views—not even rising to the level of sophistical argumentation (*sofismo*; line 7), which at least presents the appearance of logical validity—result in unconvincing if not ridiculous barbarisms (*barbarismo*; line 5). Coupled by rhyme in this sonnet, *sofismo* and *barbarismo* point beyond any doubt to Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*.[53] Sophisms are attempts to refute a logical argument that "appear to be [valid] refutations but are really fallacies instead."[54] One technique of sophistical refutation, says Aristotle, is "to reduce the

opponent to solecism, i.e., to make the answerer, in consequence of the [sophistical] argument, use some barbarous mode of expression."[55] Of the five sorts of sophistical refutation enumerated by Aristotle, ranked from best to least effective, the technique of reducing to barbarism is ranked fourth, as an unsophisticated use of language barely better the "last resort," which is "to reduce the opponent in the discussion to babbling (i.e., to constrain him to repeat himself a number of times)."[56] Barbarism itself is not a sophism; rather, it is a response that the sophist, when nearly all else fails, hopes to provoke from his opponent. The gist of lines 5–8 is perfectly clear: "How could you formulate even an apparently valid but fallacious argument (*sofismo*), since you are so ignorant that you produce nothing more than a barbarous mode of expression (*barbarismo*)?" Cavalcanti locates Guittone in the position not of the sophist but of the opponent: the one who can only respond to logically formulated arguments (whether valid or fallacious) with "a barbarous mode of expression." Guittone's "thinking," as characterized by Cavalcanti, is ignorant barbarism that doesn't even rise to the level of sophistry.[57] Lines 9–10 continue in the same vein. "Figure" (*figura*; line 9) here does not mean rhetorical figure but rather a figure of logical reasoning.[58] Not knowing how to construct syllogistic figures, Guittone has never produced a logical argument (*argomento*; line 10).

The sonnet closes with Cavalcanti discouraging Guittone from and mocking him for aspiring to compose a certain unnamed "volume"—although Guido expresses doubt that Guittone will heed his warning, since he has shown himself to be obdurate in the face of Guido's advising him to follow a more rigorously scientific path (line 11). It is possible if not likely that Cavalcanti is referring to conversations that actually had taken place, since Guido's father and Guittone seem to have been close friends.[59] The identity of the "volume of teaching[s]" or "learned book" ("d'insegnamento/volume"; lines 12–13) to which Cavalcanti is referring cannot be determined with certainty.[60] The consensus candidate is the so-called *Trattato d'amore*, a cycle of 13 poems in which the post-conversion Guittone denounces carnal desire as deadly and irrational.[61] Another plausible candidate is Guittone's canzone *Poi male tutto è nulla*, which presents various arguments against atheism.[62] One might also consider a cycle of 24 sonnets, dubbed "Teachings on Love," in which the pre-conversion Guittone, in the manner of Andreas Capellanus, offers various musings and stratagems to help lovers succeed in courting their ladies.[63] At any rate, regardless of whether Cavalcanti has a specific target in mind, the substance of his critique is that whatever Guittone has to offer cannot count as real teaching: not following the scientific method, Guittone's discourse cannot provide demonstratively certain truth; the best Guittone can do is to present *opinions*.

Thus in the opening verses of the "Teachings on Love," Guittone commits what from Cavalcanti's perspective can only be seen as an embarrassing gaffe:

> Me piacie dire com'io sento d'amore
> a pro di quelli che meno sanno di mene.
> Secondo ciò che pone alchuno atore,
> amore uno disidero d'animo ène,
> disiderando d'essere tenetore
> dela cosa che più piace ·li bene;
> lo quale piaciere ad esso è criatore
> e cosa c'a sua guida lo· ritene.[64]
>
> (I would like to give my opinion about love for the benefit of those who know less than I do. According to what a certain author affirms love is a desire of the soul longing to be in possession of the object that pleases it the most; such pleasure is both what creates love and what love keeps as its own guide.)

Assuming the role of teacher based on his claim to *know* what others do not know (this cycle is meant "for the benefit of those who *know* less than I do" ["a pro di quelli che meno *sanno* di mene"]; line 2), Guittone offers to give his opinion ("dire com'io sento" ["to say how I feel"]) about love ("d'amore"; line 1). But knowledge is precisely what elevates the philosopher above the realm of opinion. The whole point of the demonstrative syllogism, which is an objectively assertational third-person discourse (not the expression of "com'*io* sento" ("how *I* feel"/"what *I* think"), is to liberate thought from the realm of what people think/feel to be the case, from opinion. As we shall see in the course of this work, the difference between demonstratively certain knowing and opinion/belief is fundamental to Arabo-Islamic rationalist Aristotelianism and is the basis for key distinctions between *theoria* (physics and metaphysics) and *praxis* (ethics) and between science and religion. Knowing and opining are operations of two different powers, the latter of which can never attain the level of the former: opinion is a matter of imagination, the perfection of the sensitive soul (as Guittone perhaps inadvertently admits: "*io sento*"; line 1), while knowing is the perfection of intellect. Guittone immediately compounds his blunder (seen as such in Cavalcanti's eyes at least) by revealing that his claim to know more than others is based on his accepting another's opinion: "secondo ciò che pone alchuno *atore*,/amore uno disidero d'animo ène" ("according to what a certain *author* affirms love is a desire of the soul"); line 3. There could not be a more blatant instance—and it comes right at the beginning of this sonnet cycle, of passing off as knowledge a "reasoning" dependent on *auctoritas*, on what "they say"—the "they" in this case being a certain *atore* or

auctor (Andreas Capellanus[65]). As a treatment of love that appeals to *auctoritas*, Guittone's work appears in stark contrast with *Donna me prega*, where Guido famously opens by insisting that he will only settle for *natural dimostramento*. Guittone opens this "volume of teaching" with a fuzzy confusion between knowing and opining and an appeal to authority—moves that could only have made Cavalcanti laugh.

One of the chief candidates often identified as the "volume of teachings" targeted by Cavalcanti, Guittone's canzone *Poi male tutto è nulla*, is similarly comfortable with accepting reasoning grounded in opinion rather than the scientific method. Guittone's first "demonstration" of God's existence is quite simple: everybody says that God exists; therefore, He exists:

> Dio demostrando, mostrarò primamente
> che libri tutti quasi in tutte scienze,
> provando lui, son soie carte, quando
> parlan de lui, laudando;
> e testimon son soi populi totti,
> Onni lingua, onni schiatta, e onni gente
> conferman lui, destrutte altre credenze;
> e non sol nescienti omin selvaggi,
> ma li più molto e maggi
> dei filosofi tutti e altri dotti.
> E ciò ch'afferman totti,
> come Tulio dice, è necessaro;
> perché, sí com'el dice,
> non saggio alcun Dio isdice.[66]
>
> (To prove that God exists I will first show that nearly all books in all sciences, proving him, are his documentation, when they speak of him with praise. And all of his peoples are his testimony, of every language, stock, and race, confirming his existence, other beliefs having been destroyed; and not just the unlettered folk of the woods, but also most of the philosophers and other educated people—and the greatest among them. And, as Cicero says, that which all people affirm to be the case must necessarily [*è necessaro*] be so; because, as he says, not a single person of wisdom denies God's existence.)

Guittone touts his argument as proof that his assertion is *necessaro*; but as a kind of logical reasoning based on opinion rather than on premises known with certainty to be true, it falls short of providing a necessary truth.[67] Returning to *Da più a uno*, we can see why Cavalcanti would think that people—perhaps Aristotle himself[68]—might laugh at Guittone's teaching ("Fa ch' om non rida il tuo proponimento" ["Make sure that people don't laugh at your propositions!"]; line 14). The heart of

Cavalcanti's critique—involving one of the chief issues at stake in the late Duecento culture war between philosophically oriented intellectuals and Christian traditionalists—is the charge that Guittone would offer teachings involving propositions ("proponimento") not derived from nature and/or not natural: a volume that "has extranatural principles/premises" ("fòr principio ha da natura"; line 13). Authentic knowledge, for Cavalcanti, is both empiricist (stemming in the first instance from sense-perception of *naturalia*) and rationalist (guided by a virtually innate [i.e., natural] set of first principles—e.g., the whole is greater than the part). Teachings that do not adhere to these foundational elements of *natural dimostramento* do not amount to knowledge with certainty but are attenuated to at least some degree by the uncertainty that marks opinion (including "reputable opinions"[69]), belief, faith.[70] Cavalcanti's pointed reference to Guittone's religious vocation ("fra' Guittone" ["Friar Guittone"]; line 8) spotlights the gap between Guittone's Christian and Cavalcanti's Aristotelian *saver*.

A series of *tenzoni* exchanged between Cavalcanti and Guido Orlandi offers a glimpse of the late Duecento culture war—a conflict between a status quo that can be described as rooted in traditional and humanistic erudition, religious, orthodox, and Guittonian, on the one hand, and an avant-garde that is rooted in Aristotelian rationalism, philosophical, heterodox, and stilnovist, on the other—as waged between two rival combatants. The most famous (yet perhaps least revealing) of these sonnets is Cavalcanti's *Una figura della donna mia*, which is unique in his corpus for its firm grounding in a specific historical referent. We know the gist of this occasion from Giovanni Villani's account in his *Nuova cronica*. Although this account is clearly influenced by Cavalcanti's sonnet, we can regard it as accurate, given that Villani is a firsthand and reliable witness:

> In that year [1292], on July 3, great and manifest miracles began to appear in the city of Florence, through an image of the Virgin Mary painted on a pilaster in the loggia of Orsanmichele, where grain is sold. It healed the sick, straightened cripples, and restored sight to the visually impaired in large numbers. But the Dominican and Franciscan friars, out of envy or for some other reason, did not believe any of this, and so they fell into great disrepute among the Florentines. We know that on that ground the Church of Sanmichele in Orto used to stand, . . . but it was demolished to make way for a public square. Every evening the lay people sang prayers as a ritual and worship of the aforementioned image. And the news of these miracles and of the powers of Our Lady spread, so that people from throughout Tuscany made pilgrimages there, . . . [and] they brought various wax figures for miracles performed, which filled up a large part of the loggia surrounding the painted image. And the [financial] status of that company [i.e., the *Compagnia della Madonna*

> *d'Orsammichele*]—whose members included a good portion of the city's elite—grew to the extent that the poor were able to enjoy many benefits and much charity, in the form of alms and bequests. . . . And it would continue [to exist] up to our times, with an enormous revenue, which was distributed entirely to the poor.[71]

It is important to note that the phenomena involving the painting of the Virgin Mary described here and treated by Cavalcanti's sonnet did not take place in or around a church but rather in a public space where a church used to stand. That former church had been demolished in the early thirteenth century, when by order of the Commune of Florence, the area was transformed into the city's grain market. The loggia itself was built circa 1290, a few years before the appearance of these "great and manifest miracles"; it too was a public mercantile space: an open-air gallery covered so that trading at the grain market could proceed during inclement weather.

Villani's account, with its reminder of a background setting involving the destruction of a church in favor of a public marketplace, reads almost as a fable for the lay mercantile class's wresting vital functions—in this case, practical *caritas* and worship—away from the Church. The account is pregnant with implicit ironies. It seems apparent that the "some other reason" why the Dominican and Franciscan friars aim to discourage this popular practice is financial, since that practice infringes on their share of the market in devotional offerings. All the revenue generated (from membership dues, gifts from donors, and bequests) is collected by an entirely altruistic nonprofit organization which, rather than filling its own coffers, distributes everything for the benefit of the poor. Greedy mendicant friars are morally outshone by wealthy merchants (a reversal of the St. Francis's exemplary renunciation of riches in favor of aligning himself with the poor). We can probably assume that Cavalcanti's family, one of the city's very wealthiest (whose primary properties were located right on this piazza), were members of the *Compagnia*, a lay confraternity represented here as more worthy ministers to the poor than the mendicant orders.

Cavalcanti's sonnet to Guido Orlandi, although "mischievously anti-clerical"[72] and perhaps a sly provocation poking fun at the Marian devotions[73] and at the gullibility of the populace, does not amount to a critique of Christian thinking. More like a sociological or anthropological observation of certain religious practices analyzed as entirely human behavior, it remains silent concerning divine or transcendent realities that may undergird these practices:

> Una figura della Donna mia
> s'adora, Guido, a San Michele in Orto,
> ch'è di bella sembianza, onesta e pia.

De' peccatori è gran rifugio e porto,
e qual con devozion lei s'umilìa,
chi più languisce, più n'ha di conforto:
li 'nfermi sana e' domon' caccia via
e gli occhi orbati fa vedere scorto.
Sana 'n publico loco gran langori;
con reverenza la gente la 'nchina;
di luminara l'adornan di fòri.
La voce va per lontane camina;
ma dicon ch'è idolatra i Fra' Minori,
per invidia che non è lor vicina. (XLVIII[a])

(An image of my Lady is worshipped, Guido, at San Michele in Orto; it is beautiful in appearance, dignified, and merciful. It is a great refuge and haven for sinners, and those who suffer most receive the most comfort in kneeling devoutly before it: it heals the sick and casts out demons, and it makes blind eyes see clearly. It heals great debilities in a public place; the people kneel [down before] it with reverence; they adorn it with light [literally: "with illumination"] from outside. The news [of this] spreads near and far; but the Franciscans, out of envy that it is not theirs [literally: "not near them"], say that [this] is idolatry.)

Critical commentary on this sonnet primarily revolves around line 1's "Donna mia" and its effects: although this no doubt literally means "Madonna," the Virgin Mary, does Cavalcanti also want us to notice that he has replaced the usual appellation *nostra Donna*, "Our Lady," with a phrase, *donna mia*, that in Duecento love lyric virtually always signifies (often as *mia donna*) the poet's lady? Assuming that this conflation of the Virgin Mary with the poet's lady is deliberate, what is its motivation?[74] One might point to the theme of partisan self-satisfaction and dissatisfaction that ties together the sonnet's first and final lines: the poet is pleased that the worshipped lady is "mine," and the Franciscans are displeased that she is not "theirs." In either case, the lady is not rightfully acknowledged as "ours" in the sense of belonging commonly to the entire community. Or, this inflection, in a poem that lauds Mary, into the language of profane desire might be regarded as an iconoclast's flaunting of sacrilege for the sake of causing an outrage. Or, we witness here *in nuce* a conception that would flourish vastly in Dante: the poet's own *donna mia* (e.g., Beatrice) fulfilling the functions of the Savior.

Deliberately fusing sacred and profane language, quotations from the Bible with motifs and phrases from secular love lyric, is no doubt one of Cavalcanti's characteristic strategies.[75] Cavalcanti typically blends these two registers seamlessly, such that the hybridity of the discourse

is barely noticed and, rather than distinguished in a vertical hierarchy between two realms, sacred and profane are reduced to one and the same horizon. The strategy is employed in this sonnet: line 7's healing of the sick and casting out of demons (Matt. 10:8 "infirmos curate . . . daemones eicite" ["Heal the sick . . . cast out demons"]); line 9's healing, in public (*'n publico loco*), those who languish from debilities (*langori*) (Matt. 4.23: "et sanans omnem *languorem* et omnem infirmitatem *in populo*" ["healing all manner of feebleness and every infirmity, among the people"]); line 8's restoring vision to the blind (Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22).[76] Kneeling in devotion (*con devozion*) and languishing before a woman with a beautiful face (*bella sembianza*; line 3), seeking comfort or satisfaction (*conforto*; line 6): Cavalcanti transposes commonplaces of the courtly lover's desire into a poem of praise for the Virgin Mary.[77]

As mentioned, in this sonnet Cavalcanti does not offer an explicit philosophical critique of Christianity (although if we dig a little deeper we find some valuable material concerning the status of images/*phantasia* in popular religious discourse[78]); rather, he assumes the stance of an anthropologist observing and explaining religious phenomena in human terms. Still, there is enough of an irreligious air about the poem that it provoked its addressee, Orlandi, to compose an aggressively pious response—the severity of which indicates the subtle subversiveness of Cavalcanti's sonnet[79]:

S'avessi detto, amico, di Maria
gratïa plena et pia:
"Rosa vermiglia sè, piantata in orto,"
avresti scritta dritta simiglìa.
"*Et veritas et via*":
del nostro Sire fu magione, e porto
della nostra salute, quella dia
che prese Sua contia,
[che] l'angelo le porse il suo conforto;
e certo son, chi ver' lei s'umilìa
e sua colpa grandia,
che sano e salvo il fa, vivo di morto.
Ahi, qual conorto — ti darò? che plori
con Deo li tuo' fallori,
e non l'altrui: le tue parti diclina
e prendine dottrina
dal publican che dolse i suo' dolori.
Li Fra' Minori — sanno la divina
[I]scrittura latina,
e de la fede son difenditori
li bon' Predicatori:
lor predicanza è nostra medicina. (XLVIII[b])

> (If, friend, you had said of Mary *gratïa plena et pia* ["full of grace and merciful"], "You are a vermillion rose, planted in a garden," you would have written a proper simile. "*Et veritas et via*" ["And the truth and the way"]: she was the dwelling-place of our Lord, and the harbor of our salvation, that day when she had knowledge of Him, when the angel tendered his comfort; and I am certain that whoever humiliates himself before her and fully acknowledges his sin, she will make him healthy and safe, alive instead of dead.
>
> Alas, what counsel can I give you? That you weep before God for your [own] errors and not those of others: that you change your ways and take a lesson from the publican who lamented his woes. The Franciscans know the divine Latin scripture, and the good Preachers [i.e., the Dominicans] are defenders of the faith: their preaching is our medicine.)

Adhering to the custom of the response poem, Orlandi engineers his composition through a studied mimicry, by repeating elements of Cavalcanti's sonnet. Seven of Cavalcanti's rhyme words (*pia*, *orto*, *via*, *porto*, *conforto*, *s'umilìa*, *Fra' Minori*) reappear as rhyme words in this response.[80] The last of these, *Fra' Minori* (line 18), is a *rimalmezzo* (a mode of internal rhyme) rhyming with line 17's *dolori*, a device that Orlandi also employs in line 13 (*conorto*, rhyming with line 12's *morto*) and by which he aims to surpass Cavalcanti in formal ingenuity. These two internal rhymes are carefully placed in the same position—in the first line and in the same metrical slot—in their respective quintains. The seven borrowed rhyme words are frontloaded, six of them occurring in the first 10 lines of this 22-line poem. The lengthy gap of eight lines between the sixth (*s'umilìa*) and the seventh (*Fra' Minori*) of these is calculated to match the eight-line gap between *s'umilìa* (line 5) and *Fra' Minori* (line 13) in Cavalcanti's sonnet. Nor is the reference to the New Testament story (Luke 18:10–14) of the *publican* (line 17) accidental: its precedent is Cavalcanti's *'n publico loco* (line 9).

But if Orlandi mimics Cavalcanti, he also tries to outshine him in Guittonian manner. Rather than a sonnet, he offers a *sonetto rinterzato* (interpolated sonnet) with this rhyme scheme: *AaBAaB, AaBAaB; (b) CcDdC, (c)DdCcD*. A normal sonnet of 14 decasyllabic lines (signified here with uppercase letters; note that this is the rhyme scheme of Cavalcanti's sonnet) is intercalated with eight heptasyllabic lines (signified here with lowercase letters; the lower-case (b) and (c) refer to the internal rhymes of lines 10 and 15).

This formal play is semantically crucial. Orlandi has constructed two poetic spaces clearly distinguishable from each other: unlike Cavalcanti's seamless fusion of sacred and profane language, Orlandi's hybrid invention shows seams that are plainly in sight.[81] Most importantly, Latin—quotation from the Bible and liturgical Latin—is reserved for

the heptasyllabic space (which is also the locus of the self-referential phrase *scrittura latina* [line 19]).[82] The things of God are demarcated (in verses of seven syllables—seven being God's number) from the things of man. Orlandi resists the sort of conflation of divine and human that could speak of "Our Lady" as "my lady" and that would approach the Christian faith as if it were *human, all too human*.

Orlandi faults Cavalcanti for his inappropriate simile (line 4). The simile in question can be rendered thus: the Virgin Mary is like *Donna mia* (Mary is a *figura* of Cavalcanti's lady: *una figura della Donna mia* [line 1]): the ordinary folk in Orsanmichele worship an image of Guido's Lady); as does my Lady, so does the Virgin, in a certain (imaginary) mode, provide healing salvation. Orlandi recognizes the subtext of the whole situation—the possibility of a salvation obtained "my way," outside the confines of the Church (because the Lady pertains to all humans universally, although she is rendered as a particular image for Christians), and he perceives that Cavalcanti is not uncomfortable with that possibility. So, he exhorts Cavalcanti to abandon his wrong path and turn to the one true "medicine" (*medicina*, line 22): Holy Latin Writ (*la divina/[I]scrittura latina*; lines 18–19). Reactivating the *nostra* of Nostra Donna, which Cavalcanti had occluded, Orlandi speaks of "our salvation" (*nostra salute*; line 7) and "our medicine" (*nostra medicina*; line 22). Such medicine (Holy Scripture) is accessible to all of "us." To receive truly salvific healing, one does not have to be (as the *falasifa* maintained) a specially endowed member of an intellectual elite. This explains both the curious characterization of the Franciscans as "knowing" (*sanno* ["they know"]; line 18) and the reference to the Dominicans (line 21), unmentioned in Cavalcanti's sonnet. By reintroducing the Dominicans (who are mentioned in Villani's chronicle), Orlandi sets up a semiotic structure that brings into play the commonplace late medieval distinction between the two mendicant orders: Franciscans excel in matters of loving and willing; Dominicans excel in matters of knowing and intellecting. If Orlandi, contrary to this, attributes knowing to the Franciscans, it is because this sort of knowing (familiarity with the Vulgate Bible: *sanno la divina/[I]scrittura latina*) is not an intellecting. Our medicine, the instrument of our salvation, does not involve intellection as its *sine qua non*. On the other hand, Cavalcanti's special exclusive medicine, the healing cure that philosophers can find in, for example, Avicenna's *Al-Shifā'* (his magnum opus, the title of which is rendered in English as "The Cure" or "The Healing") is only salvific insofar as it is intellection. Orlandi's message to Cavalcanti is something like this: to be cured, we do not have to know what Avicenna knew.

This *tenzone* shows Orlandi as a Christian traditionalist, Guittonian both in the formal manner and pious content of his verse. The other two *tenzioni* between these two Guidos further exhibit the antagonism that, under a veneer of polite goodwill, opposes two different worldviews and two incongruous understandings of love as the focal point of the poet's

vocation. The first of these is initiated with the following sonnet addressed by Cavalcanti to Orlandi:

La bella donna dove Amor si mostra
ch'è tanto di valor pleno ed adorno,
tragge lo cor della persona vostra:
e' prende vita in far co·llei soggiorno,
per c'ha sì dolce guardia la sua chiostra,
ch'el sente invidia ciascun lunicorno,
e la vertù de l'alma ha fera giostra.
Vizio pos' dir no i fa crudel ritorno:
ch'ell'è per certo di sì gran valenza,
che già non manca i·llei cosa da bene,
ma' che Natura la creò mortale;
poi mostra che 'n ciò mise provedenza
ch'al vostro intendimento si convene
far, per conoscer, quel ch'a lu' sia tale.

(XLIX[a])[83]

(The beautiful lady in whom [literally: "where"] Love shows itself, who is so very replete and adorned with worth, removes your heart from your body: and, residing with her, it revives; because of this, her [virginal] enclosure has a sentry duty so sweet that every unicorn feels envy towards [your heart], and your soul's virtue has fierce combat [literally: "jousting"]. I can affirm that vice does not make a ferocious return [to the fray]: because she is certainly of such great worth that indeed she lacks no good thing, except for [the fact that] Nature created her mortal; and [this] shows that Nature acted providentially in doing so; for it is fitting to make, so that your understanding [i.e., intellect: *intendimento*] might know [*conoscer*], that which is similar to [your faculty of understanding]).

This poem is normally read as ironic, with insinuations of imperfection or vice attributed either to Orlandi or to his lady. Although Orlandi's heart—the envy of every unicorn[84]—guards his lady's virginity, the one who would force entry is none other than Orlandi himself. Compelled by carnal passion, the virtue or power of Orlandi's soul (*la vertù de l'alma*; line 7) has a fierce "joust"; this is either an internal battle between his ethical faculty of soul (the soul's highest *vertù*, as we will see in *Donna me prega*) and his soul's appetitive concupiscence (lust); or (more literally) a battle between Orlandi's self—his still animated body (*persona*; line 3)—and his heart (no longer in his body), which defends the lady: between Orlandi and an external force. Orlandi's ethical faculty (or his heart) wins this initial skirmish. If Orlandi's "vice" does not "make a ferocious return" (line 8) for a second round of combat (i.e., if he gives

up his effort to sexually assault his lady), this is not because of any virtue of Orlandi's soul but because of the lady's "great worth" and her human perfection (lines 9–10).[85] Orlandi would if he could, but he can't—and *her* virtue rather than his is the reason he can't. The sonnet praises Orlandi's lady even as it disparages the pious Orlandi for his sexual vice.[86]

There is probably some truth to this interpretation in an ironic key: Orlandi's reply seems to pick up on Cavalcanti's insinuations and amounts to the assertion that his intentions toward his lady are most honorable.[87] But this reading renders somewhat trivial a sonnet that in fact has considerable philosophical depth and is something of a poetic manifesto. It ignores the closing tercet, which makes a philosophical turn, and so fails to recognize the sonnet's hybridity: several verses of troubadour commonplaces[88] precede an Aristotelian conclusion. This turn begins in line 11 (itself still a traditional convention[89]): the lady's one and only flaw is that Nature created her mortal. Cavalcanti pronounces this providential, since Orlandi has been matched with an object (his lady) that is commensurate with the level of his intellect (*intendimento*[90]; line 13). According to a fundamental Aristotelian principle, knowing (*conoscer*; line 14) mandates and amounts to the identity or similarity of the knower and the object known. Orlandi has been given a mortal lady because he has a mortal intellect.[91] What kind of intellect is mortal? The answer: practical intellect, the sensitive soul's ethical faculty—which is "intellect" only equivocally and can operate in the realm of the good (*bene*; line 10) but not in the realm of the true, in morality but not in science. Orlandi's *donna* is human and mortal. By implication—and this point will find support in the *tenzone* that we will read next—Cavalcanti's *donna* is beyond-human and immortal. What sorts of things might Orlandi know/learn from his lady? Precisely every *cosa da bene* (line 10), everything involving the *good*: he can turn to her for wisdom concerning virtue (line 7) and vice (line 8): questions concerning ethics. If Orlandi were to know his lady, he would remain, like her, mortal. If Cavalcanti were to know his Lady (who is not really a lady, not a human person, but rather a metaphysical Intelligence), he would transcend the realm of nature, of generation and corruption, of death. Orlandi's lady possesses the good of the rational soul but not the science of the intellect. In this non-ironic reading, the lady's virtue is not disparaged, nor is Orlandi's: she is virtuous, and his soul does win the battle. But the field of this virtue's operation is the realm of nature, of things (such as ethical values) that change because they have a beginning and an end.

Cavalcanti's sonnet indicates Orlandi's epistemological limitations: his "knowledge" can only be, at best, "know-how": how to act well in the ordinary human world, the natural world of generation and corruption (i.e., mortality). At the same time, it indicates the limitations of the pre-stilnovist lyric tradition—hence the first 11 lines, filled with traditional courtly love commonplaces. Cavalcanti is characterizing the

poetic tradition, from the Occitan troubadours through the Sicilians to the Guittonians, as, at its best, ethical. This is not blameworthy per se. But by means of this indication, Cavalcanti announces, by implication, that his own poetic enterprise aims for a knowledge not flawed by mortality—a knowledge that is, unequivocally, intellection. The old poetry is limited: it treats love in the ordinary sense of the word, and its ladies are ladies, not allegories for metaphysical intelligible forms. Cavalcanti prefers a higher poetic vocation: to talk about things that transcend the mundane. Cavalcanti desires knowledge in the authentic sense—and providence has granted him a lady not marred by mortality.

The other *tenzone* between Orlandi and Cavalcanti is fascinating for its formal playfulness (involving skillful gamesmanship on the part of both poets), and it offers from Cavalcanti another poetic manifesto that is in some ways clear and in other ways profoundly enigmatic. The exchange seems to have been initiated with this "sonnet" addressed by Orlandi to Cavalcanti:

Per troppa sottigliansa il fil si rompe,
e 'l grosso ferma l'arcone al tenèro;
e se la sguarda non dirizz' al vero,
in te forse t'avèn, che cheri pompe;
e qual non pon ben diritto lo so[n] pe'
traballa spesso, non loquendo intero;

ch'Amor sincero — non piange né ride:
in ciò conduce spesso omo o fema,
per segnoraggio prende e divide.
E tu 'l feristi? e no·lli par la sema?
Ovidio leggi: più di te ne vide!
Dal mio balestro guarda ed aggi tema. (L^a)

(Too thin [*per troppa sottigliansa*] a [crossbow] string breaks, and a thick one gets the arrow stuck at the handle; and if you don't set your sight on the true [target], it's your own fault [literally: "in you it comes about"]—you perhaps who seek ostentation. And whoever doesn't plant his foot quite right often wobbles, not speaking [a] complete [discourse];

for genuine … Love neither weeps nor laughs: [although] it often drives a man or a woman to do so, [but] with [the rights due to] lordship it brings [them] together and separates [them]. And [you say] you wounded him? yet he does not appear to have the scar? Read Ovid: he understood more about [Love] than you! Watch out for my crossbow and be afraid.)

I say "sonnet" because this poem of 12 verses indicates, through its rhyme scheme, that it lacks two verses (lines 7 and 8, indicated here with a blank space [and, in my translation, by the empty space between the

octave and the sestet]): ABBA, AB_ _; (b)CDC, DCD.[92] Not by chance, these two verses vanish immediately upon Orlandi's observation that a poet might lose his balance and fail to complete his speech: Orlandi himself (intentionally) goes wobbly, exhibiting the flaw that he means to ascribe to Cavalcanti.[93]

The first six lines mention various blunders in crossbow marksmanship as metaphors for Cavalcanti's errors in composing verse. His poetry is marred by an abundance of subtleness (*sottigliansa*; line 1)—philosophical erudition that exceeds the grasp of an audience (see earlier section, Part One, on Bonagiunta's *tenzone* with Guinizelli). Here again Orlandi's poem is damning itself, since his 12-verse sonnet is manifestly "thin" (*sottile*). Yet at the same time, Orlandi accuses Cavalcanti of being "thick" (*grosso*; line 2): not artful or clever; lacking acumen and acuteness in powers of observation. Specific instances of Cavalcanti's thickness are criticized in the sestet: Cavalcanti represents Love as weeping and laughing when in fact Love makes men and women weep and laugh (lines 7–9)[94]; Cavalcanti (says Orlandi) confuses the agent with the actor, claiming that Love has been wounded—although everyone who has read Ovid knows that Love is not wounded but rather wounds the lover (lines 10–12).[95] Cavalcanti's aim as a poet is merely to show off (*cheri pompe* ["you seek ostentation"]; line 4)—presumably, to display his intellectual superiority. Subverting his own sonnet's propriety, Orlandi faults Cavalcanti for his inability to provide integral discourse (*non loquendo intero*; line 6) precisely at that point where his own poem's integrity is marred by incompletion: the missing verses that would have been numbered 7 and 8. Orlandi is apparently referring to Cavalcanti's experimental canzone *Poi che di doglia*, a *carmen interruptum* that abruptly breaks off into silence before its second stanza can begin.[96] Line 10's semantic content—the question of the wound and of the nonappearance of a scar—is impressively congruent with the poem's striking formal anomaly: the gaping wound left at its very heart by the removal of two—the two central ones, the very core—of its 14 verses. Orlandi takes care to conceal this wound by stitching it over: there is no obvious interruption of sense, as the thought of lines 7–9 flows logically from line 6; more remarkably, lines 6 and 7 are sutured together, stitched (with the poem's sole deployment of this device) by the *rimalmezzo* at the caesura (literally, the Latin *caesura* means "cutting," "that which is cut off") of line 7 (*sincero*) to the end rhyme of line 6 (*intero*). Orlandi derisively wonders about the absence of a scar (*sema*) by which Cavalcanti might prove that Love has been wounded (line 10), while managing in his own poem both to conceal its wound and to leave signs of a scar. (As Favati notes, the obsolete Italian *sema*, meaning "scar," was recognized in the Renaissance as derived from the Greek *sema*, "sign" or "mark."[97]) Orlandi marks his poem's wound with a sign (line 7's *sincero*) that sews together what has been hewn into disjointed parts (see also line 9: *divide*). That

very sign *sincero* (from the Latin s*incerus* ["whole," "entire"]) conceals and reveals that the poem is neither whole nor entire—and it does so through its rhyming with *intero* ("whole," "entire"). Whatever Cavalcanti may have thought of him, one ought to admit that Orlandi is a poet of considerable ingenuity.

Cavalcanti replies with some gamesmanship of his own—a 16-verse "sonnet" meant in part to provide two expendable verses to supplement the two lacking in Orlandi's poem:

De vil matera mi conven parlare
e perder rime, silabe e sonetto,
sì ch'a me stesso guiro ed imprometto
a tal voler per modo legge dare.
Perché sacciate balestra legare
e coglier con isquadra arcile in tetto
e certe fiate aggiate Ovidio letto
e trar quadrelli e false rime usare,
non pò venire per la vostra mente,
là dove insegna, Amor, sottile e piano,
di sua maner' a dire e di su' stato.
Già non è cosa che si porti in mano:
qual che voi siate, egli è d'un'altra gente:
sol al parlar si vede chi v'è stato.
Già non vi toccò lo sonetto primo:
Amore ha fabricato ciò ch'io limo. (L^b)

(I am obliged to speak about ignoble/frivolous matter[s] and to waste rhymes, syllables, and a sonnet, so that I solemnly swear to myself to regulate this aim to a suitable measure. Just because you know how to string a crossbow and to hit the top of a crate using a sight and you've read Ovid a few times and to shoot quarrels [i.e., crossbow arrows] and to use fallacious rhymes—[that doesn't mean that] Love can come into your mind [*per la vostra mente*], there where he teaches, sophisticated [*sottile*] and clear, about [how] to express [*dire*] his appearance [*manera*] and about his [actual] state [*stato*] [of being]. Indeed [Love] is not a thing that one holds in one's hand: whoever you are, [Love] is of a different species/essence [*gente*]: one sees who has been there [i.e., Love] only in [his] speech. The first sonnet didn't hit you [*non vi toccò*: "didn't touch/reach you": i.e., you didn't understand the first sonnet] at all. Love has forged [i.e., fashioned, made, produced] that [discourse] which I polish.)

Although on the level of literal content (the crossbow metaphor; the *tenzone* as an exchange of arrows; the reference to Ovid; the discussion of Love), Cavalcanti's composition clearly acknowledges Orlandi's

provocation, departing from custom it does not use the same rhyme scheme nor does it contain any of the same rhymes or rhyme words as Orlandi's poem.[98] The effect is to emphasize "the distance that separates the two correspondents [and] the *matera* [subject matter] of their poetry"[99] and to highlight the innovation that *does* link the two poems formally: the two-verse coda (lines 15–16), which Cavalcanti dangles as a sort of donation that might be transplanted into Orlandi's sonnet to replace its missing heart.

In the opening quatrain, Cavalcanti expresses annoyance for being obliged, in responding to Orlandi's attack, to waste his poetic art on treating *vil matera* (line 1), "lowly matter[s]." The "matter" under discussion is lowly in two ways.[100] First, the use of personification as a literary device is an elementary subject matter. All worthy poets ought to know that poetic license allows free rein in using such devices: fussing about verisimilitude on the literal level (e.g., debating whether it is Love or lovers who cry or who are wounded) is pointless, if only because the literal level is not meant to be taken literally. Second, *matter* is intrinsically lowly.[101] *Vil matera* in this sense *is* love—not Love as understood by Cavalcanti but love as understood in the usual manner by ordinary poets. Cavalcanti would eagerly discourse on Love, but he would rather not waste his time speaking of about love—that is, about questions involving human individuals with human desires engaged in various physical, emotional, or romantic relations with other humans. For Cavalcanti, Love is the very opposite of the *vil matera* that is the referent of commonplace love poetry: Love is noble and nonmaterial (and, as we shall see presently, supra-discursive). The quatrain closes with sly irony: Cavalcanti announces that, in measured fashion (*per modo*; line 4), he will obey a self-imposed law (lines 3–4); yet the outstanding feature of this poem is its immoderately disobeying—and he was apparently the first Italian poet to do so—the law that stipulates a sonnet's permissible length to be 14 verses.[102]

After mocking (lines 5–8) the seriousness of Orlandi's reading—Cavalcanti chides him for perusing Ovid while practicing archery—and of his technical poetic skill (and taking a swipe at his proficiency with a crossbow), Cavalcanti gets to the crux of the matter in line 9: Orlandi is, quite literally, mentally deficient, since his *mente* is not of the sort that might learn from Love's teachings ("Love cannot enter your mind [*mente*]—that locus where he teaches [*là dove insegna*], with a sophisticated and lucid discourse, about how to express his outward appearance and about his actual state of being"; lines 9–11). *Mente* here means "mind"—but only in a certain limited sense. This is not *mens* as *nous*/*intellectus* ("intellect") but rather, in keeping with Cavalcanti's lexicon, "mind" as the name for the reasoning capacity of the human soul—a soul that (naturally) is corporeal/sensitive (and thus mortal) and performs its rational operations through its powers of *phantasia*/imagination and memory—*not* of intellection.[103]

We must carefully sift through these verses to see the way that Cavalcanti means to distinguish his mind from Orlandi's. Apparently, Love cannot enter Orlandi's *mente* but *can* enter Cavalcanti's. Love has location: we can speak of a "there" (*là*) "where he teaches" (*dove insegna*). This means that Love—at least insofar as he provides discursive instruction—is not an intelligible form—since there is no "place" for intelligible forms in the human *mente*. With its power of memory, the *mente* can store in its possession images but not intelligibles, and the highest level of human thinking is a mode of *phantasia*/imagination.

What does Love teach there, in the *mente* of those who comprise a worthy audience for Love's lessons? Love teaches about how to express (*dire*) his appearance and about his actual state (*stato*; line 11) of being.[104] The issue at stake in this *tenzone* concerns the proper manner of speaking about Love. Orlandi touts Ovid as the authoritative master of this matter; Cavalcanti claims that his signifying practice has been taught to him by no less an authority than Love himself—a claim (precursor to Dante's formulation of the Sweet New Style in *Purgatory*) that he fortifies in the final verse by declaring that Love is the true creator of his poetry.

Love teaches two sorts of things: some things concerning how to talk about Love's appearance (*di sua maner' a dire*) and some things about Love's actual state of being (*e di su' stato*). These two sorts of things are nonidentical: Love's appearance in language and Love's actual being. This is the difference between the *phantasma*/image, which can have a place in the human *mente*, and the intelligible form, which cannot. The next tercet (lines 12–14) clarifies this nonidentity, emphasizing that Love itself never appears: "Indeed [Love] is not a thing that one holds in one's hand: whoever you are, [Love] is of a different species/essence [*gente*]: one sees who has been there [i.e., Love] only in his speech." What Love teaches about Love's actual state of being is that it never appears in [Love's] language. Love is always absent from our perception, and what remains in its (non-) place is speech (*parlar*; line 14). In the *mente*, Love provides language about Love without presenting for viewing (*theoria*: contemplation, *speculatio*) Love itself: there is an irremediable deficiency in language (including Love's language) about Love.[105] Using *ratio* (speech, discourse), Love teaches the human *mente* that Love never appears in *ratio*: Love's reality (as intelligible form) is supra-discursive. This is one of the lessons of Arabo-Aristotelian rationalist philosophy.

Nor does Love appear to humans non-discursively, because Love and humans do not belong to the same species ("whoever you are, [Love] is of a different species"; line 13). Love is a pure intelligible form; as such it can only be intellected by an intellect. But human thinking takes place in the *mente*, which even in its highest operations—modes of *phantasia*/imagination and memory—remains, as soul, bound up with [*vil*] *matera*. Love's status (*stato*) is higher than human: it is a metaphysical not

a physical species. Love occupies the rank (*stato*) of those realities that have no place: no matter who one is and wherever one may be, Love will always be absent; what will be seen in its place—as its placeholder—is *parlar* (line 14), language: a material sign of the nonmaterial.

Orlandi thinks that there is no sign (*sema*) of Love's wound ("And you say you wounded him? yet he does not appear to have the scar [*sema*]?"; line 10). Cavalcanti replies that, due to the severance between Love and Love's *parlar*, there is only ever—for us—signs. On a general level, Cavalcanti's poem concerns the difference between language and being. Thus two key words appear in the poem twice: *parlar[e]* (lines 1 and 14) and s*tato* (lines 11 and 14)—a reiteration emphasizing that the poem treats speech (*parlar*) and reality (*stato*, a form of the verb *essere*: "to be," "being"), the visible and the invisible, the physical and the metaphysical; this emphasis is supported by another instance of the same distinction, this time expressed as the difference between manner and matter (which are bound together by internal rhyme [line 11's *manera* and line 1's *matera*]).

Cavalcanti's point in rebuttal to Orlandi's attack is summed up in line 12: Love is not something that you can hold in your hand. In this rebuttal, Cavalcanti is obliged to speak (*parlare*; line 1), against his custom, about vile matter (*de vil matera*; line 1); he considers this a waste of his language (line 2), which he would prefer to use to indicate nonmaterial principles. Cavalcanti is saying:

> My poetry does not set its sights on something whose state of being is physical—something that may be perceived in the natural world of human existence (e.g., lovers loving)—but rather on something metaphysical. So, it is foolish to judge my figures of speech according to how well they match up with things that we do see (e.g., lovers weeping and laughing). I have no interest in speaking about love relationships, and when I say 'Love' I am not talking about such things.[106] In fact, my using figures of speech that do not properly present Love in terms coherent with sense-perceptible experience turns out to be a proper mode of signifying what cannot be experienced.

And, we might emphasize, "Love" is itself a figure of speech, one of the ways that Cavalcanti refers to pure intelligible forms—the principles of the causes of all beings.[107]

But there remains the question concerning Orlandi's mental deficiency. Love can enter Cavalcanti's *mente*—there where Love teaches its lessons—but not Orlandi's. Cavalcanti can entertain in his mind thoughts involving images that point toward what is higher than images, material signs that point to nonmaterial (i.e., intelligible) forms, a mode of *parlar* that refers to things that have always already disappeared; such

thoughts never enter Orlandi's mind. Whatever the precise cause of Orlandi's inability to recognize that Love is not something one can hold in one's hand, this misrecognition amounts to an ethical failure: one's rank in the scale of ethical worth, from the vile to the noble, is determined by the sorts of intentional forms that one sets as the target of one's most consuming desire. Orlandi aims for something that can be spoken of, seen ("Ovid saw [*vide*] more about [Love] than you"; line 11), and held in one's hand; Cavalcanti aims for something that can speak of itself ("Love has produced that discourse which I polish"; line 16) yet can never be seen, something that transcends *ratio*.

Notes

1 As Domenico De Robertis says (Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, ed. Domenico De Robertis [Torino: Einaudi, 1986], xi; further references to this edition will be indicated by the abbreviation *DeR*): "There is perhaps no greater example, in the history of [Italian] literature (especially in its early period), of celebrated glory to equal that enjoyed by Guido Cavalcanti while still alive." On Cavalcanti's status as, in medieval Italy, "the only early vernacular author, naturally besides Dante" who was "elevate[d] to the rank of an *auctoritas*," see Zygmunt G. Barański, "Guido Cavalcanti and his First Readers," in Maria Luisa Ardizzone, ed. *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori* (Firenze: Cadmo, 2003), 154, 155, 162. For the ensemble of Trecento characterizations of Cavalcanti, see (in addition to De Robertis and Barański) Roberto Rea, "La *Vita nuova* e le *Rime*. *Unus philosophus alter poeta*: Un'ipotesi per Cavalcanti e Dante," in *Dante fra il settecentocinquantenario della nascita (2015) e il settecentenario della morte (2021)*, ed. Enrico Malato and Andrea Mazzucchi (Rome: Salerno, 2016), 351–381; Jonathan Usher, "Boccaccio, Cavalcanti's Canzone 'Donna me prega' and Dino's Glosses," *Heliotropia* 2 (2004): 1–19.
2 Quoted in Barański, "Guido," 161–162.
3 *Cronica* 1.20; quoted in Usher, "Boccaccio," 2.
4 Quoted in Barański, "Guido," 156.
5 Quoted in Usher, "Boccaccio," 2.
6 Ibid.
7 Quoted in Rea, "La *Vita nuova*," 365.
8 Ibid., 273.
9 Barański, "Guido," 163.
10 Quoted in Usher, "Boccaccio," 2.
11 Rea ("La Vita nuova," 377) contends, without evidence, that Cavalcanti came to abandon "a poetry that, for him, could only be love lyric and thus intrinsically limited on the speculative/theoretical level." This view, which takes "Love" literally, erroneously downplays the philosophical depth of Cavalcanti's lyric corpus—an error that we will redress in Part Four.
12 *R/I* (299), including this sonnet in the edition of Cavalcanti's *Rime*, endorses Contini's view that Guido seems to be the addressee.
13 *R/I*, 299–300.
14 See Giorgio Inglese, *L'intelletto e l'amore: Studi sulla letteratura italiana del Due e Trecento* (Milan: La Nuova Italia, 2000), 206n18. In *Introduction to Chapter 10 of Sanhedrin* (a work that was circulated among the Jewish community of Rome in the early Trecento), Maimonides repeatedly

mentions Epicureans as "those who *state* that the resurrection of the dead does not exist" (Mosè Maimonide, *Immortalità e resurrezione*, ed. Giuseppe Laras [Brescia: Morcelliana, 2006], 50; emphasis added; see also 91–92, 107). Note that for Maimonides, as for Dante, the Epicureans' error is *stating*, openly declaring, what they believe to be the case.

15 In Guido's corpus of 50 poems, of which less than 30 can be considered love poems, forms of *ferire* ("to strike," "to hit") occur 12 times across 10 poems, including three times in conjunction with *occhi* (e.g., "Per li *occhi fere* la sua claritate"; IX.23); *occhi* appears 37 times across 25 poems (e.g., "degli *occhi* vostri un *lume* di merzede"; XXII.10; *dolce* 19 times across 18 poems (e.g., "ne' suoi *dolci occhi*, de la donna mia"; XXIV.4); *lume* four times across four poems. Dante has Guido's father speak his son's language, although without understanding.

16 Inglese (*L'intelletto*, 199–225) provides an outstanding treatment of this tale's Radical Aristotelian context. For a detailed reading of the tale from the perspective of a Heideggerian poetics that entails an anti-foundational notion of right *praxis*, see my *The Ethics of Nature in the Middle Ages: On Boccaccio's Poetaphysics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 107–121.

17 *Decameron* 6.9; quoted in Usher, "Boccaccio," 3.

18 Ibid.

19 See Antonio Gagliardi, *Giovanni Boccaccio: Poeta, filosofo, averroísta* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1999).

20 *Decameron* 6.9; quoted in Stone, "The Ethics of Nature," 112.

21 See Inglese, *L'intelletto*, 223; see also Kurt Flasch, "Attributionsatheismus in Boccaccios *Decameron* VI, 9: Guido Cavalcanti," in *Atheismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, ed. Friedrich Niewöhner and Olaf Pluta (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 126.

22 Papahagi, "Guido Guinizelli," 269: for Dante "Guinizelli remains 'the sage' *par excellence* (*Vita nuova* 20.3), the '*maximus* Guido' of the *De vulgari eloquentia* (1.15.6), 'quel nobile Guido Guinizelli' of *Convivio* (4.20.7), and the author of the manifesto of the Dolce Stil Nuovo (i.e., *Al cor gentil*)"; on the other hand, Dante vehemently and insistently "reproaches Guittone and takes great pains to diminish his worth and significance" (289). For a thorough enumeration of Dante's mentions of Guittone and Guinizelli, see Guglielmo Gorni, "Guittone e Dante," in *Guittone d'Arezzo nel settimo centenario della morte*, *Guittone d'Arezzo nel settimo centenario della morte*, ed. Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 1995), 309–335. Gorni, although remarking (320) that for Dante Guinizelli is "the constant positive pole in relation to which the negative pole is represented by [Guittone]," shows that Dante was more indebted to Guittone than his disparaging remarks suggest.

23 Michelangelo Picone ("I due Guidi: una tenzone virtuale?," in *Guido Cavalcanti laico e le origini della poesia europea*, ed. Rossend Arqués [Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004], 9) attributes to Cavalcanti the

> 'discovery' of Guinizelli in Florence in the early 1280s and thus the effort to found a new movement (later called the 'dolce stil novo' by Dante) on the basis of a few lyric poems that the Bolognese poet had composed a decade earlier to counter the dominance of the old Guittonian school.

See also Roberto Rea, *Cavalcanti poeta: Uno studio sul lessico lirico* (Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2008), 111–137; Pirovano, *Il dolce stil novo*, 73–74.

24 For an outstanding treatment of this sonnet, see Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, pp. 61–102.

25 Text from *Poeti del Duecento*, ed. Gianfranco Contini (Milan: Ricciardi, 1960), vol. 1, 255.

26 The former opens with the poet's declaration that his lady is Lucifer (meaning "light-bringing," with no allusion to the angel who became Satan), the *lucente stella diana* ("shining morning star")—that is to say, the planet Venus, having taken on human form. Verse 5 of Guinizelli's sonnet ("viso de neve colorato in *grana*" ["(a) face of snow colored with pomegranate"]) is the target of ridicule in verse 8 of Guittone's: "che 'n viso di *grana* ave colore." For the text of Guinizelli's sonnet, see Pelosi, *Rime*, 51–52. On the fact that only a small portion of Guinizelli's small poetic corpus exhibits stilnovist elements, see Gorni, "Guinizelli e la nuova," 39.

27 Guinizelli, *Rime*, ed. Pelosi, 57–58.

28 One might regard Guinizelli's composition of the poem that founds the Sweet New Style, *Al cor gentil*, as, in part, a kind of joke or, rather, as a rising to the challenge: Guittone had said that Guinizelli denigrates the ontological status of the lady, and so Guinizelli in response elevates her to the status of a metaphysical Intelligence. See Justin Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante: Urban Readers and Writers in Late Medieval Italy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 42–43, as well as the previous studies cited there.

29 See the entry *cusare* (a variant spelling of *cosare*) in the Tesoro della lingua Italiana degli Origini (TLIO), http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/TLIO/.

30 *Psychology of The Cure* 5.1; Avicenna Latinus, *Liber De Anima seu Sextus De Naturalibus IV-V* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 78–79:

> And the former [the theoretical/speculative faculty] is for determining what is necessary, impossible, or possible, while latter [the practical faculty] is for determining what is shameful, fine, or permissible. The premises of the former come from the first principles [e.g., the whole is greater than the part], while the premises of the latter come from what is probable, received opinion [*ex auctoritatibus*], and things said to be the case [*famosis*].

31 Catarina Belo, "Some Considerations on Averroes' Views Regarding Women and Their Role in Society," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20 (2009): 20:

> Averroes' considerations on women . . . offer a remarkably original insight. He considers women on a par with men in essence and intellectual ability. His references to women break new ground, and prefigure important debates that would flourish in modern Europe.

In *Guide of the Perplexed* (2.30), Maimonides insists that there is no mention of "rib" (a minor part of a whole human body) in Genesis's story of the creation of Eve from Adam but rather an account of the division of a whole (human) into two equal halves (Eve and Adam).

32 Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, 13–59. My translations and several elements of my discussion of this tenzone are indebted to Borsa's study, from which the texts are taken. For an excellent account of recent interpretations of the *tenzone* and relevant bibliography, see Anthony Nussmeier, "Dante, Guinizelli, Guittone, and the Politics of Literary Debate," *Textual Cultures* 7 (2012): 43–72. See also Steinberg, *Accounting for* Dante, 36–39.

33 "Guittone d'Arezzo was the most successful, innovative, influential, and prolific poet of his generation. Yet his fame did not much outlast the poet's death,

and for centuries since, his literary greatness has been called into question" (Antonello Borra, Preface to Guittone d'Arezzo, *Selected Poems and Prose* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017], xiii). Nussmeier ("Dante," 54), remarking on "Guittone's long-standing role as the most important literary figure of the Duecento," indicates that "there was hardly a poet or a political figure with whom Guittone did not correspond either in poetry or prose, or that did not write about, emulate, or pay homage to him."

34 "The central event of [Guittone's] life . . . , the one around which all of his writings are organized, appears to have been the religious conversion that coincided with the complete rejection of the considerable body of love poetry that had till then been the basis of his fame" (Borra [Guittone d'Arezzo] *Selected Poems*, 9).

35 *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo*, 263 (poem 231):

> Dispregio pregio u' non pregi'ha pregianza,
> ni laudar laudo u' laudan essi laudando;
> nomino, ma u' nomar dea nomanza,
> pisana usanza vetusa uso usando. 4
> Cortes da corte accort'hai cortesanza,
> sigur sigura siguri non sigurando,
> dotta non dotti u' dotta t'è dottanza,
> manda se mandi a che mandasti mando. 8
> Aude che audi audii chero audienza,
> a mundo in mundo mundo a che mundano,
> a **gaudo gaudo** u' **gaudei** non **gaudente**;
> Pare non pare che sparvi a mia parvenza, 11
> vanii in vana vanitade vano,
> non posso e posso al poder del possente. 14

36 But Steinberg (*Accounting for Dante*, 38–39) makes a good case for reading even the manifest version of the poem (i.e., as translated in the first of the two versions formulated by Borsa) as ironic: Guinizelli casts Guittone in the role of inquisitor and censor, as one who is threatened by free thinkers.

37 See Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, 22.

38 Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, 22–23.

39 For the recent history of the exegesis of this *tenzone*, with emphasis on the irony of Guittone's reply, see Laura Paolino, "Il dileggio dei padre. Note di lettura per *Figlio mio dilettoso, in faccia laude* di Guittone d'Arezzo," *Nuova rivista di letteratura italiana* 17 (2014): 23–49.

40 On Guittone's successful one-upmanship, see Nussmeier, "Dante," 53, 57–58, 68–69.

41 *R/I* (246) characterizes this sonnet as

> a very harsh attack against Guittone, whom [Cavalcanti] . . . accuses of being incapable of producing logically coherent arguments, thus rejecting with a single blow not specific contents or positions [expressed by Guittone] but rather his entire work, which is vitiated by a structural flaw and by [Guittone's] fundamental ignorance.

42 I am using the text proposed by Nicòlo Pasero in his outstanding study of this sonnet "Contribuiti all'interpretazione del sonetto *Da più a uno face un sollegismo* di Guido Cavalcanti," *Medioevo letterario d'Italia* 6 (2009: 25–43). Gessani's exegesis (*Dante, Guido Cavalcanti*, 187–196) is equally accurate and valuable. I have also drawn on Marian Papahagi's perceptive remarks in his lucid study of the poem "Una lezione di logica nel Duecento: per l'interpretazione del sonetto cavalcantiano 'Da più a uno face

un sollegismo'," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, Philologia* 38 (1993: 3–24). Papahagi shows that the poem's reputation as difficult to understand is much exaggerated and that many previous treatments of what have been taken as multiple cruxes are impertinent because they do not grasp Cavalcanti's precise adherence to the language of Aristotelian logic. The well-informed glosses of *DeR* and *R/I* provide clarification along similar lines.

43 On the precision and accuracy of Cavalcanti's use of the terminology of Aristotelian logic, see Gessani, *Dante, Guido Cavalcanti*, 188–190.

44 Claudio Giunta, "Una parola di Guido Cavalcanti: 'orismo'?," *Lingua e stile* 41 (2006), 106:

> The first three verses of the sonnet are . . . a formal definition of the syllogism, and a definition that seems to be based on that given by Aristotle in *Prior Analytics* 24b 18–20, and in *Topics* 100a 25–27: 'Thus a syllogism is a discourse in which, certain things [see *più*, line 1] being stated [see *si pone,* line 2], something [see *uno*, line 1] other than what is stated follows of necessity [see *pruova necessario*, line 3] from their being so'. The formula *da più a uno* is very close to that used by Averroes in his commentary on the *Prior Analytics*: 'Thus a syllogism is a discourse in which, several things [*res plures:* see *più*, line 1] having been posited, one thing [*una*: see *uno*, line 1] necessarily [*ex necessitate,* see *necessario*, line 3] follows on account of these things [having been] posited'.

45 For the history of these various interpretations, see Pasero, "Contibuiti," 29–30 and Giunta, "Una parola."

46 Papahagi, "Una lezione," 18.

47 *DeR* (185) proposes *arismo* as "number," a reading accepted by Gessani (*Dante, Guido Cavalcanti*, 188–189).

48 Giunta ("Una parola," 107–108), who argues (persuasively, in my view) in favor of *rismo* as *orismo* (*horismos*), "definition," admits that he cannot find a related word in any late medieval Latin philosophical texts, where the Greek *horismos* is always translated as *definitio*; he suggests that, given that Latin translations often employed Latinized transliterations of Greek terms, sometimes along with the original Greek, Cavalcanti may have come across the word in a source that we have not been able to identify. At any rate, I agree with Giunta that "with regard to its contextual [philosophical] pertinence, the option *orismo* seems far and away preferable to the other two [i.e., *rismo* as 'rhyme' and *arismo* as 'number']."

49 Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 91a1: "The definition makes clear what [a thing] is, and the demonstration that this is or is not true of that."

50 *Prior Analytics* 24b19–22:

> A deduction [i.e., a demonstrative syllogism] is a discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so. I mean by the last phrase that it follows because of them, and by this, that no further term [e.g., a definition] is required from without in order to make the consequence necessary.

51 Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 90b18: "So it is clear that there is not definition of everything of which there is demonstration." The distinction between definition and demonstration, and the fact that the latter can perform its operations without the former, are clearly presented in Aquinas's commentary on this part of *Posterior Analytics* (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's 'Posterior Analytics'* 2.2, trans. Richard Berquist

[Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 2007], 243): "These arguments have shown that there are not demonstrations of all the things of which there are definitions, and that there are not definitions of all the things of which there are demonstrations."

52 Papahagi, "Una lezione," 16.

53 See Giovannella Desideri, "Sed rideret Aristotiles si audiret . . . 'Da più a uno face un sollegismo'," in *Alle origini dell'Io lirico: Cavalcanti o dell'interiorità*, ed. R. Antonelli (Rome: Viella, 2001), 199–221. Desideri argues that line 1's *sollegismo*—normally taken to mean "syllogism"—is an intentional barbarism on Cavalcanti's part, a hybrid of "solecism" and "syllogism" and thus itself a solecism. While valuable for its highlighting playful elements of the sonnet, Desideri's essay is misleading in its unsubstantiated claim that Cavalcanti's account of the logical syllogism in the first quatrain is "imprecise" and marked by "glaring inaccuracy" (207); in fact, that account could hardly be more precise and accurate.

54 Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*, 164a20–21.

55 *Sophistical Refutations*, 165b19–21. For the identification of this passage in Aristotle as the source of the nexus solecism-barbarism-sofism (see lines 1, 5, and 7), see Desideri, "Sed rideret," 219; the Latin translation quoted there reads: "soloecismo uti facere (hoc autem est facere secundum locutionem *barbarizare* ex oration respondentem"; emphasis added.

56 *Sophistical Refutations* 165b15–16. "Best" and "last resort" are expressions used by Aristotle in this enumeration of the five kinds of sophistical refutation.

57 As Giunta notes ("Una parola," 107), "sophism" as practiced in late medieval universities was a logical exercise involving counterintuitive statements that can equally be proven true or false; in this sense, Cavalcanti would be placing Guittone's discourse last in a ranking of three: (1) the demonstration syllogism, (2) the sophism—a sophisticated [but not sophistical] argument, and (3) a barbarous mode of expression.

58 See Giunta, "Una parola," 107; Pasero, "Contribuiti," 32. Aristotle uses "figure" throughout *Posterior Analytics*—for example, in this passage (which also happens to mention the distinction between "definition" and "demonstration" employed by Cavalcanti in the first quatrain):

> A man might puzzle over whether one can know the same thing in the same respect by definition and by demonstration, or whether that is impossible. For definition seems to be of what a thing is, and what a thing is is in every case universal and affirmative, but deductions are some of them negative and not universal—e.g., those in the *second figure* are all negative and those in the *third figure* not universal.
>
> (90b3–7; emphases added)

59 Papahagi, "Una lezione," 9.

60 Pasero ("Contribuiti," 35–39) gives a fine thorough treatment of this question.

61 Guittone d'Arezzo, *Del carnale amore*, ed. Roberta Capelli (Rome: Carocci, 2007).

62 *DeR*, 184.

63 See Guittone D'Arezzo, *Selected Poems*, 122–169.

64 Ibid., 122; trans. Borra.

65 Ibid.

66 *Le rime di Guittone*, ed. Egidi, 80–81.

67 *De*R, 184:

> If there is one of Guittone's texts that might have provoked such a disdainful reaction, it is the canzone *Poi male tutto è nulla* . . . , a demonstration entirely founded on *auctoritates* and on *consensus omnium* . . . , thus on a method that is essentially inductive.

In Aristotelian logic, inductive reasoning can at best show that a proposition is probable; it cannot "pruova necessario" (*Da più a uno*, line 3). See also Pasero, "Contribuiti," 36.

68 Desideri ("Sed rideret," 199, 221), quoting two remarks by Dante ("quod non solum est impossibile, sed rideret Aristotiles si audiret" [*Questio de acqua et terra* 12.24]; "E sanza dubbio forte riderebbe Aristotile udendo fare spezie due de l'umana generazione" [*Convivio* 4.15.6]), suggests that "Aristotle would laugh if he heard that" was an expression current among intellectuals in Cavalcanti's day.

69 In the Aristotelian tradition, opinions can be regarded as reputable insofar as they are probably true, and so opinion per se does not immediately provoke skepticism. Nonetheless, arguments that use reputable opinion are "dialectical" deductions: they are of a lower order than the demonstrative syllogism and cannot provide certain truth or science/knowledge. As we will see, this distinction between demonstration (knowledge) and dialectic (opinion) plays a key role involving various important aspects of Arabo-Islamic rationalism such as the relative value and function of philosophy and religion.

70 See Gessani, *Dante, Guido Cavalcanti*, 193–194.

71 *Nuova cronica di Giovanni Villani* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 2010), 8.155.

72 Ronald L. Martinez, "Guido Cavalcanti's 'Una figura della Donna mia' and the Specter of Idolatry Haunting the Stilnovo," *Exemplaria* 15 (2003): 303.

73 Cassata, ed., Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, 215.

74 Martinez ("Guido Cavalcanti's 'Una figura'") makes a strong case for rejecting previous critics attempts to deny this conflation, and he argues that Cavalcanti's purpose was to offer a "parody of stilnovo formulas for the lady's wondrous effects" (310) and to implicate himself in the "*idolatria* of his lady's image" (313).

75 "In the field of Italian poetry of the Duecento, Cavalcanti is perhaps (prior to the exceptional case of Dante's love for Beatrice) the poet who showed the greatest audacity and irreverence in creating new relations between biblical language and the language of love lyric" (Mauro Scarabelli, "'Una figura della Donna mia': Un episodio de polemica antifigurativa nelle 'Rime' di Guido Cavalcanti," *Italianistica: Rivista di letteratura italiana* 38 [2009]: 30).

76 *De*R, 188; *R/I,* 252–253.

77 See Martinez, "Guido Cavalcanti's 'Una figura'"; Scarabelli "Una figura," 29–30; Cassata, *Rime*, 215.

78 As Scarabelli insists ("Una figura," 34), there is a stark difference of worth, involving *illumination*, between Cavalcanti's (metaphysical) lady and the painted image of the Virgin Mary: the brightness of the former, which radiates outward from an interior dimension, is the "sign of a sort of metaphysical superiority," while the latter "is found accidentally surrounded by a light, coming from outside, that is anything but supernatural." Cavalcanti's lady (actively and essentially) *illuminates from within*; this *figura* (the image; the painting) of his lady ("una figura della donna mia"; line 1) is (passively and accidentally) *illuminated from without* ("di luminara l'adornan di fòri" ["they adorn it with illumination from outside"]; line 11).

79 Martinez, "Guido Cavalcanti's 'una figura," 301. See also *R*/I, 254, which says that Orlandi grasps "the irreverent and blasphemous character of Cavalcanti's sonnet" and "fervently defends the sacrality of the image of the Virgin and the devotion of the faithful."
80 *DeR*, 190.
81 See Martinez "Guido Cavalcanti's 'Una figura," 316.
82 *DeR*, 190.
83 I have made very slight punctuation changes (following Cassata's edition) at the end of lines 7 and 8.
84 *R/I*, 258: "According to legend reported in medieval bestiaries and widely repeated in courtly lyric, the unicorn, attracted by the fragrance of the laps of virgin maidens, falls asleep in their arms, thus becoming easy prey for hunters."
85 *R/I*, with some hesitation, interprets the sonnet as Cavalcanti's exhorting Orlandi "to admit the earthly and sensual nature of his amorous passion, as well as of his lady's" (257) and speaks of Cavalcanti's "insinuations of [Orlandi's] temptation to yield to his carnal desire" (261).
86 Cassata's one-line introduction to this poem distills this reading: "Praise of Guido Orlandi's beloved lady, while at the same time shaming him" (222). *DeR* (193–196) finds hints that the sonnet also calls into question the lady's virtue.
87 For Orlandi's sonnet in response, see *R/I*, 260–262; *DeR*, 196–197.
88 *DeR* (193), remarking on the first quatrain, characterizes it as "a series of commonplaces: Love in her, full of worth, heart borne off that revives in her presence." Cassata (222–223), in glossing the first ten verses, points to several antecedents in troubadour poetry. *R/I* (257) finds Cavalcanti's praise of Orlandi's lady "artificial and hyperbolic," marked by what is for Cavalcanti an "uncharacteristic use of courtly themes and images," including the unicorn. To this we can add the feudal metaphors of the enclosed castle and the military joust.
89 See Cassata, *Rime*, 223.
90 *DeR* (194) rightly glosses *intendimento* as "intelletto"; this was the technical term for "intellect" in Romance vernacular philosophy (the Catalan equivalent, *ententiment*, is used by Cavalcanti's contemporary Ramon Llull throughout his massive corpus and translated as *intellectus* in his Latin writings). *R/I*'s claim (259) that *intendimento* here means amorous desire (as in Orlandi's "intention" toward his lady) and *not* intellect is unconvincing and does not suit the clearly Aristotelian context of line 14.
91 Favati (*Inchiesta*, 103) reads this as an insult, arguing that Cavalcanti is in effect calling Orlandi "intellectually dead"; he links this to Boccaccio's tale of Cavalcanti's remarks to the *brigata* in *Decameron* 6.9 (treated above). But this goes too far: in Cavalcanti's eyes Orlandi does have an intellect of sorts, although one that is limited in its reach.
92 The "(b)" in the first line of the sestet represents the *rimalmezzo* linking *sincero* (line 7) and *intero* (line 6).
93 As Corrado Calenda ("*Di vil matera*: ipotesi esplicativa di una ipertrofia strutturale," *Strumenti critici* 16 [1982]: 142) insists, philologists have searched in vain to reconstruct the missing verses that might have gone here, since Orlandi intentionally constructs an incomplete sonnet. See also Luciano Rossi, "Maestria poetica e *grivoiserie* nelle tenzioni Orlandi-Cavalcanti," in *Studi di Filologia e letteratura italiana in onore di Gianvito Resta*, ed. V. Massiello (Rome: Salerno, 2000), 29.

94 As *R/I* (265) remarks, Orlandi is alluding to "Cavalcanti's typical tendency to project his own emotions [i.e., the emotions of a human lover] onto a personified Love."
95 For Love as wounded in the heart in Cavalcanti, see IX, 37–39 (*R/I*, 82).
96 See *R/I*, 263; Rossi, "Maestria," 32.
97 Favati, *Inchiesta*, 85.
98 Yet, as *DeR* (201) remarks, it does share the same rhyme scheme (not counting the two-verse coda) as Cavalcanti's own *Perché non fuoro a me gli occhi dispenti* (*R/I*, poem XII, 3–96); this is probably no coincidence, since the latter poem, as noted above, portrays Love as weeping and contains the phrase *porta 'n man* (line 14), which appears here in line 12's *porti in mano*.
99 Valentina P. Pollidori, "Le Rime di Guido Orlandi," in *Studi di filologia italiana* 53 (1995); quoted in *R/I*, 266.
100 Or, three ways, if one accepts Rossi's claim that there is an obscene subtext.
101 Thinkers in the classical Arabic rationalist tradition, such as Cavalcanti, are for the most part both materialists and anti-materialists: they accept that demonstrative science is grounded in physical sense-perception and suggest that the human soul cannot exist without matter, yet at the same time they insist that genuine science/knowledge is of intelligible forms that are nonmaterial.
102 On Cavalcanti as the inventor of the *sonetto caudato*, see Calenda, "De vil matera."
103 Rea, with his masterful grasp of Cavalcanti's lexicon, provides a nearly flawless account: "The *mente* is the locus of the cognitive process of the abstraction, transformation, and retention of the *phantasma* [i.e., image] pertaining to love that, as detailed in *Donna me prega*, involves *memoria* . . . [The *mente* is] a faculty of the sensitive [i.e., animal/mortal] soul. . . . The failure of the attempt to sustain and to complete the mental processing of the *phantasma* of the lady leads to the declaration of the inadequacy of the [human] intellective faculty itself" (*Cavalcanti poeta*, 338–339). I say "nearly flawless" with reference to Rea's phrases "*phantasma* pertaining to love" and "*phantasma* of the lady": Rea's account may give the impression that there is something unique about love and about the lady that make their *phantasmata* extraordinarily unknowable; but in fact this intellective failure applies to all human efforts at intellection, and so one ought to say here "*phantasma*," period. The lady is (merely) a poetic figure for the pure (nonmaterial: she is the very opposite of *vil matera*) intelligible—any intelligible whatsoever. It is not solely the intelligible form of the lady that exceeds the grasp of the human *mente*; rather, it is any and every intelligible form. Cavalcanti does not maintain two distinct theories of human intellection (one that who hold only for the intelligible forms of the lady and of those *phantasmata* involving love; another that would apply generally to the intelligible forms of other sorts of entities). In other words, one could take Rea's words to mean that the human intellective faculty (which otherwise functions properly) breaks down when it encounters and loves the lady (a faulty line of interpretation that impairs certain otherwise adequate readings of *Donna me prega*); instead, I think, Cavalcanti talks of the human mind's absolute incapacity to attain intellection of intelligible forms.
104 Notice that Cavalcanti, unusually, rhymes *stato*, equivocally, with itself (lines 11 and 14). The effect is to solidify *stato*'s sense as indivisible *essere*/being. In his response poem (which we will not treat here), Orlandi corrects this anomaly by rhyming *stato* with *amato*.

105 As Elena Lombardi ("The Grammar of Vision in Guido Cavalcanti," in Maria Luisa Ardizzone, ed., *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori* [Firenze: Cadmo, 2003], 91–92) perceptively remarks concerning humans' intellectual vision (the viewing of "light") in Cavalcanti, such vision (*if* it were even possible, we might add) instantly triggers a "blackout" and hence never lingers in the *mente* (memory).

106 As Enrico Fenzi (*La canzone d'amore di Guido Cavalcanti e i suoi antichi commenti* [Genova, Il Melangolo, 1999], 53) points out, Cavalcanti is "not at all interested in talking about 'love relationships' and even less so about the social theatre in which these relationships are played out."

107 As Blanco Valdés remarks (*El amor*, 21), one characteristic of stilnovist poetry is the tendency to reduce a traditional tripartite scheme of courtly lyric (the lover; the lady; Love) to a scheme with just two terms: the lover on the one hand, the lady/Love on the other: the distinction between the lady and Love is frequently blurred. In Cavalcanti, this means that Love and the Lady are both at times employed as figures for the same thing: the intelligible form.

Part Three
The Salvation of Intellect in Arabic Aristotelian Philosophy

Guido Cavalcanti uses the discourse of love poetry to carry on conversations in philosophy. The question is: what kind of philosophy? On the most general level, Guido stands within a tradition (albeit in a manner of skeptic) according to which "the purpose of philosophy can be defined as the divinization of man, the 'assimilation of man to god as far as possible'—words of Plato's *Theaetetus* (176b)."[1] Not simply a matter of casting a disinterested view on other, non-philosophical things, philosophy finds in itself "the means for [the philosopher's] reaching a higher plane of existence," the way to ultimate happiness and "perfection of life."[2] Philosophy deems itself the *only* way by which humans might attain the ultimate perfection possible for them—a perfection in which they are no longer human but rather, transformed, have joined the ranks of the divine beings.

More specifically, Cavalcanti stands within the tradition of Arabic rationalist philosophy—an Aristotelianism inflected by this Neoplatonic aim for divinization. His poetry revolves around one of the primary themes of the medieval Islamic and Jewish rationalist philosophical tradition—a set of concerns that I refer to as the Salvation of Intellect. According to the major thinkers of this tradition (al-Farabi, Avicenna, Ibn Bajja, Averroes, Maimonides), the immortality of the human soul is not to be taken for granted. For these philosophers, this question is bound up with the distinction between soul and intellect. Soul, by definition, is the form that animates a body; when the body perishes, so does the soul, and thus the notion of an immortal soul is a nonstarter.[3] If there is an immortal element of a human being, it can only be intellect, which is in no way physical or material and thus is incorruptible. By nature, all humans are born with potential not actual intellect; we are not born immortal but rather with a potential to attain immortality. Our becoming immortal is by no means guaranteed. The highest attainment of a human's life is to make one's intellect actual, thus becoming in some sense a divine rather than natural being. One can only transform one's potential intellect into actual intellect through arduous philosophical study and metaphysical speculation, and thus the great majority of humans—all non-philosophers and all philosophers whose

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thinking does not rise to the level of metaphysical knowledge—cannot possibly become divine beings. In brief, virtually all humans are, like all other animals, entirely mortal.

According to these philosophers, the event of one's potential intellect becoming actual intellect—an event termed the Conjunction with the Active Intellect[4]—is what their religious scriptures and traditions refer to using metaphorical and symbolic terms such as "the afterlife," "the world to come," "eternal bliss," "reward in heaven," "Paradise," "salvation." Although all humans are obliged to follow virtuous religious Laws and prescriptions (since these are necessary for the happiness of individuals and communities in this life on earth), ethical virtue and religious piety do not qualify humans for immortality. There is no eternal felicity for humans outside that attained in intellection of metaphysical entities—that is, the Conjunction with the Active Intellect. The eternal reward promised by religious Laws is in fact reserved strictly for philosophers.

The nowadays almost forgotten question concerning the Active (or, as it is also called, the Agent) Intellect is "one of the central themes in the history of Western thought."[5] The notion was first formulated by Aristotle in a brief, terse, and enigmatic passage in *De anima*—a work that is arguably "the most commented on of all texts in the history of philosophy to date" and a passage that may well have "provoked more thinking, speaking, discussion, and writing" than any other text in that history.[6]

In his treatment of "the thinking part of the soul"—that is, "the part of the soul with which the soul knows"—Aristotle makes a distinction between "two factors" or "distinct elements," between two facets of "thought" (*nous*): a passive element, insofar as thought "is what it is by virtue of becoming all things"; an active element, insofar as thought "is what it is by virtue of making all things."[7] Aristotle compares the relation between this latter, active element of thought and the former, passive element of thought to the relation between light and potentially (but not actually) visible colors: "This is a sort of positive state like light: for in a sense light makes potential colors into actual colors."[8] Concerning this active or productive thought (*nous poietikos*, rendered in medieval Latin as *intellectus agens* [Agent Intellect] or *intellectus activus* [Active Intellect]), Aristotle says the following: "Thought in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity (for always the active is superior to the passive factor, the originating force to the matter)."[9] Again concerning this active or productive thought, he adds:

> It does not sometimes think and sometimes not think. When separated it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal (we do not remember because, while this is impassible, passive thought is perishable); and without this nothing thinks.[10]

In their efforts to make sense of this passage from *De anima*, commentators often read these remarks in the light of two other places where Aristotle discusses *nous* (*intellectus*). In *Generation of Animals* Aristotle asserts that only *nous* enters the human embryo "from the outside" (that is, as something that is not previously existing matter—something not provided by the male's semen or by "the material supplied by the female"), and he suggests that *nous*, as an absolutely noncorporeal substance, is "divine": "It remains, then, for *nous* alone to enter [from outside] and alone to be divine, for no bodily activity has any connection with the activity of *nous*."[11] In *Metaphysics* Aristotle again distinguishes between two facets of *nous* (a passive or potential *nous* and an active or actual *nous*), and he maintains that the latter is not only divine but is not other than God.[12]

The massive amount of commentary generated by Aristotle's remarks on intellect in *De anima* testifies to the fact that those remarks are by no means easy to understand. Regardless of what Aristotle really means by an "active" (or, "productive") intellect (*nous poietikos*) here, what matters for our purposes is what he was taken to mean by the philosophical tradition that shaped Cavalcanti's thinking—in sum, the tradition of medieval Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Averroist Aristotelianism. The leading thinkers in this tradition, in general, agreed on the following points.

First, the Active Intellect is a *separate substance*. Not simply a power, faculty, disposition, or activity of some other substance (e.g., a faculty or power of a human being), it is a real entity in the cosmos, an actual being. Moreover, interpreting Aristotle's claim that "thought [*nous*] in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed," the *falasifa* insist that this real entity must be absolutely noncorporeal (entirely *separate* from any kind of physical or bodily matter): it is a divine, metaphysical entity—eternal, nonmaterial, unchanging. Sometimes the Active Intellect is taken to be another name for God, but more often it is considered to be an Intelligence (i.e., an Angel)—more specifically, the lowest or last of a hierarchical series of Intelligences emanating from the First Cause (i.e., from God).[13] As that Intelligence that is ontologically in closest proximity to the sublunary world of natural things (things that are generable and corruptible, temporal, mortal, changing, and of finite motion—earthly rather than heavenly things), the Active Intellect has some special relation to the terrestrial and to the human. Just above the boundary between the realm of nature and the realm of divinity (the realm of eternity, permanence, infinite motion, and immortality), the Active Intellect turns its attention downward toward the former realm, for which, according to some, it serves as the giver of the forms of all natural things.[14]

Second, a recurring theme common to many representatives of this philosophical tradition is the notion that the highest product of the

human cognitive process (a process that begins with our empirical sense perception of objects in the natural world) is *phantasia*—imagination. In reply to a question that had been left open by Aristotle—namely, whether human thinking "proves to be a form of imagination" and "impossible without imagination," thus requiring "a body as a condition of its existence"[15]—the *falasifa* often insist that, indeed, humans cannot ever think without images. If and when we do so, we are no longer human but have become superhuman ("transhuman," as Dante says in *Paradiso*). As corporeal symbolization or bodily representation, thinking with images (human thinking—i.e., *phantasia*) is not actual thought (*nous/intellectus*) in the proper sense, since the latter is absolutely noncorporeal. Human cognitive activity cannot produce fully denuded concepts, pure abstractions, universal intelligible forms; the most it can do is produce approximations, still wrapped in the guise of particular accidents or nonessential features, of such forms.[16] Humans, in and of themselves, do not have the power to produce actual thought. Insofar as humans do think intelligible forms, it is thanks to the power of a nonhuman, divine substance—that metaphysical Intelligence known as *nous poietikos*, productive intellect, the Active Intellect. Our thinking is not actual thought but is *phantasia*, at least until its potential for knowing intelligible forms is activated from above the realm of nature. In short, there is no knowing in the strict sense, for humans, outside that produced, in the Conjunction with the Active Intellect (that moment when human intellect becomes or comes close to becoming divine intellect), by the intellecting power of the Active Intellect.

Third, this Conjunction with the Active Intellect is not just the only way that humans can have actual thought (knowledge or science), but it is also the ultimate *telos*, aim, perfection, and happiness of human life. Only in the Conjunction does the human animal rise above nature to enjoy in some manner the eternity of the divine realm. The transition from human thinking (*phantasia*; *imaginatio*) to divine thought (*nous*; *intellectus*) is the event of the mortal human animal's becoming immortal. This happens insofar as the Conjunction entails not just knowing what the Active Intellect knows but more than that knowing the Active Intellect itself. Based on the Aristotelian principle of the identity of the knower and the known ("what thinks and what is thought are identical"; "thought and object of thought are the same"[17]), the idea here is that insofar as we know the Active Intellect itself we *are* the Active Intellect itself—we are, that is, a separate substance, a noncorporeal, divine being. The highest human happiness is to become other and higher than human, to become an Intelligence, an Angel.

This notion that humans are naturally mortal yet potentially immortal is shaped by Aristotle's remarks, in Book 10 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, concerning the "complete happiness" of the "blessed man." After having spent most of the work discussing happiness as virtuous practical

activity (a kind of true happiness to which Aristotle gives the general name "political action"), Aristotle now maintains that the highest happiness is "the activity of intellect," both because it "aim[s] at no end beyond itself" (i.e., it alone "would seem to be loved for its own sake") and because it is leisurely rather than unleisurely activity. Aristotle's view on humans' relation to the life of intellect appears ambivalent. On the one hand, that life is too high for humans; on the other hand, that life is the essence of the human and the highest human happiness:

> But a life of this sort would exceed what is human. For it is not insofar as he is a human being that a person will live in this way, but insofar as there is something divine present in him. And this divine thing is as far superior to the composite thing as its activity is superior to the activity that accords with the other virtue [i.e., political action]. So if the intellect is something divine in comparison to the human being, the life in accord with this intellect would also be divine in comparison to the human life. But one ought not—as some recommend—to think only about human things because one is a human being, nor only about mortal things because one is mortal, but rather to make oneself immortal, insofar as that is possible, and to strain every nerve to live in accord with what is the most excellent of the things in oneself. . . . And it would seem that each person even *is* this thing [i.e., intellect], if in fact it is what is authoritative and better in him. It would be strange, then, if a person should not choose the life that is his own but rather that of something else. What was said before fits well now too, for what is proper to each is by nature most excellent and most pleasant for each. And so for a human being, this is the life that accords with the intellect, if in fact this especially *is* a human being. This life, therefore, is also the happiest.[18]

Although by the end of this passage Aristotle has denied that intellect "would exceed what is human," determining instead that intellect *is* human, this overall ambivalence left a strong mark on the Arabo-Islamic philosophical tradition. For one thing, it gave rise to a distinction between humans as human beings and humans as divine beings. The highest happiness, the ultimate perfection, of humans as human beings is moral and political virtue (*praxis*)—one's pursuing right actions and avoiding wrong ones, necessarily as part of a community that does the same. The philosopher belongs to this community and plays an important, indeed leading, role in its founding and/or preservation. The highest happiness, the ultimate perfection, of humans as divine beings is knowledge (*theoria*)—knowing the essences and causes of divine, metaphysical entities. (This distinction between *praxis* and *theoria* is the very foundation of Dante's *Comedy*.) It is here that philosophers part

company with the rest of the community, for only philosophers (and, among philosophers, only those who reach the most advanced modes of speculation) may possibly be transformed from human as human being to human as divine being. For most humans, life is essentially political, the only authentic happiness being a terrestrial or secular happiness naturally attainable by everyone. The highest happiness—knowledge of divine truth—is beyond nearly everyone's reach. At the same time, Aristotle's ambivalence planted the seeds of skepticism: while the *falasifa* maintain the divinization, through metaphysical knowledge, of the naturally mortal human being as an ideal aim, they also often cast some degree of doubt upon the possibility of such divinization. While on the one hand advising would-be philosophers to strive to become pure intellect, the major *falasifa* frequently recognize that the divine life of *nous* would indeed "exceed what is human." As we will see, such skepticism is at the very heart of Cavalcanti's philosophical-poetic project.

At any rate, this making ourselves immortal, this transforming ourselves from what we naturally are into what transcends nature, is regarded by the *falasifa* as the true reality underlying religious myths such as "Paradise," "eternal bliss," "the immortal afterlife," and "salvation in Heaven." So, according to Maimonides, a human's "ultimate perfection" is "to have an intellect *in actu*," and this "is the only cause of permanent preservation [i.e., of immortality]."[19] For Averroes, the Conjunction with the Active Intellect is "the final felicity for man and eternal life subject to neither alteration nor corruption"—i.e., the only real possibility that humans have for salvation or an immortal afterlife.[20] But this final felicity and eternal life is not a natural given: as Averroes says concerning human perfections such as actual intellect,

> nothing [of them] exists by nature save the dispositions alone or the beginnings leading to their attainment. There is no sure sufficiency in nature that these completions will reach us in their perfection; rather, they reach [us] only through will and skillfulness.[21]

In other words, it is up to humans to make their potential intellects worthy of becoming actual intellect, to prepare themselves for the possibility of the Conjunction, through the willful decision to develop their aptitude for and to dedicate themselves to the study of philosophy.

The felicitous immortal afterlife that is spoken about in religious scriptures as a reward for the meritorious and is set in opposition to the punishment that awaits the blameworthy is, according to the *falasifa*, indeed a reward. But it is a reward that cannot be earned through piety, moral virtue, proper actions, holding correct beliefs about God, making professions of faith, or following prescribed religious Laws.[22] It can only be earned through philosophizing in the manner of a master metaphysician—only attained through the acquisition of

demonstratively true knowledge concerning superlunary divine entities. As Maimonides insists, the notions of truth and knowledge are simply never relevant to matters of morality, ethics, politics, or right practice.[23] Since one's immortality or salvation depends on one's acquiring true knowledge of theoretical things (i.e., the sorts of things that Dante calls "outside human control"[24])—and not just of any such things but only of those that Dante classifies as "divinity" (i.e., metaphysical, supernatural, nonmaterial entities)—then it is self-evident that there can be no *praxis* that in and of itself can bring about salvation. Right moral practices, such as moderation or even ascetism, can tend to promote a life of philosophical speculation, and they may even be a necessary foundation for a philosophical life, but in themselves they are never sufficient for salvation, which is nothing other than intellection of a metaphysical entity. The *falasifa* undermine the whole religious edifice built on images of rewards and punishments in the afterlife meted out for right and wrong actions in this life. Or, more precisely, they teach that that edifice ought to be maintained (even if it is not true) for the sake of promoting social justice and community tranquility here on earth. This startling teaching—that one's good or bad behavior in this life does not determine one's status in the afterlife—is obviously a scandal for commonly held conceptions of the monotheistic religions and no doubt the reason why Avicenna says that "the true nature of the afterlife" must not be disclosed to ordinary people and why Maimonides opens his *Essay on Resurrection* by citing Prov. 12:23 ("A man of sense conceals what he knows").[25]

The self-aggrandizing elitism of this philosophical tradition, which allows humans no eternal happiness other than that attained during the very highest level of philosophical speculation, is tempered insofar as many of these thinkers seem to doubt (or at least to be quite uncertain) that the Conjunction is in fact a real possibility; their assertions amount to the view that *if* human immortality and eternal bliss *were* possible, it could only be through intellection of a metaphysical (i.e., divine) entity. Even those thinkers who seem to affirm the possibility of the Conjunction acknowledge that the attainment of this highest human good and ultimate human happiness is tremendously rare and suggest that it entails the effacement of any individual elements of the human subject such as personality or memory. Al-Farabi was reputed among the *falasifa* of al-Andalus to have said, in a now lost commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, that "happiness exists in this life and this world and 'everything else that is spoken of is nothing but drivel and old wives' tales.'"[26] Averroes declares that "it has been made clear to you that the felicity . . . is only attainable in this life" and teaches that the notion of afterlife refers not to a state of felicity that one will enjoy after death but rather to a felicity that one will enjoy, in this life, *after* the obstacles, burdens, and obligations of "life" (the political and

practical issues with which the thinker ought to be engaged) have been successfully negotiated.[27]

The phrase "Salvation of Intellect" is not meant to suggest that our intellect is diseased, corrupted, or in some way lacking. It is not a matter of determining what moral practices, faith declarations, or philosophical maneuvers might be taken to save our intellect. The Intellect does not need our help (except insofar as it may use images produced by our *phantasia* to think sublunary things), and it is never in disrepair; rather, it is permanently in a state of beatitude. At issue is not a matter of how the Intellect might be saved; rather, it is a matter of how the Intellect might save us—we who do not possess intellect except in an equivocal sense. In Cavalcanti's Averroist view, the Intellect in question is not *ours*; it is not *in* us as some potential of ours that might be developed or as our essential human nature that might be perfected. The place of the Intellect is not a human subject. The Intellect is extra-human (supernatural, superlunary) and thus not an essential element of human nature. The salvation in question is the philosopher's attainment of immortality, the event by which the erstwhile human crosses over from the material, sublunary realm of generation and corruption to the realm of immaterial, unalterable being (an event which Dante, in the first canto of *Paradiso*, compares to the transformation—"transhumanizing" [*trasumanar*, in Dante's coinage]—of Glaucus from an ordinary fisherman into an immortal deity). The Intellect saves not by actualizing our human potential and thereby bringing our human being to its specifically human perfection, but by turning us into something we are not—into itself, into Intellect (and this is what happens near the very end of *Paradiso*, when Dante is for a brief instant conjoined with God).[28] The Intellect is not the essential perfection of human nature but rather is that external Agent which, extraordinarily and not as a matter of course, enables a human to *trasumanar*, turning a human into a transhuman, a "beyond human."

As Albertus Magnus recognized, philosophy was for the *falasifa* not merely a chosen profession but a kind of faith or religion—a hope concerning one's ultimate destiny: "The philosopher's firm hope [*fiducia philosophantis*] is not to be conjoined [*coniungi*] with the Agent [i.e., Active Intellect] only as efficient [cause], but also as *form*."[29] In other words, the Conjunction is longed for not simply because it is a relation by which the Active Intellect triggers or activates (as an efficient cause) the human capacity to have intellectual knowledge of a variety of things, but rather because it is the event by which the human form (essence) is transformed into the form (essence) of the Active Intellect: the philosopher and the Active Intellect become *essentially* the same—i.e., identical, in the sense that they are now both divine and of the same genus. As Alain de Libera remarks, this formulation by Albert is "the Charter of Latin Averroism, or, more precisely, of Radical Aristotelianism."[30] Guido's lyric persona longs for such a Conjunction but, like several of

the *falasifa* themselves, is also convinced of its impossibility—hence the troubled and sometimes disconsolate striving that pervades his poetry.[31]

Presently we will consider in detail the three most influential Islamic rationalist philosophers—al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes—, limiting our discussion to questions concerning intellection that are prerequisites for understanding Cavalcanti. It is not possible here to give a more complete picture, which would show how their epistemological positions lead to wide-ranging, nuanced, sophisticated, and radically innovative systems that combine such topics as prophetology, political theory, eschatology, scriptural hermeneutics, and the sociology and philosophy of religion. These socially and politically relevant systems are the bases on which Dante builds *Comedy*; thus, in *Dante and the Salvation of Intellect* we will revisit these three philosophers, adding consideration of Maimonides and his legion of Jewish followers in late medieval Europe.

Al-Farabi on the Conjunction

Al-Farabi (b. AD 870 in Farab, Turkistan, d. AD 950 in Damascus), who became known as the "Second Teacher" (surpassed in importance only by Aristotle) and whose philosophical activity was centered especially in Baghdad and Aleppo, is one of the founders of Arabo-Islamic *falsafa* and one of that tradition's most influential figures.[32] Al-Farabi's thought played a fundamental role among the leading philosophers of the Islamic West (al-Andalus), where his views were regarded as authoritative by Ibn Bajja and where he was held in high esteem by Ibn Bajja's great disciple, Averroes. Al-Farabi's stature there had a decisive impact on the preeminent Jewish thinker Maimonides (who was born and raised in al-Andalus but later migrated to Cairo): on nearly all important matters, Maimonides's positions are consonant with al-Farabi's.[33] Virtually all Jewish philosophy in late medieval and early Renaissance Europe (especially in Spain, southern France, and Italy) was profoundly indebted to Maimonides (whose authoritative standing would be difficult to overestimate); this, over and above the substantial direct translation and transmission of al-Farabi's writings into Hebrew, meant that Jewish philosophy of that period in Europe was in many key aspects fundamentally Farabian.[34] Similarly, al-Farabi's influence on Christian philosophy in the same period included both direct (e.g., a number of treatises translated into Latin) and indirect (e.g., the fact that Albertus Magnus's Aristotle is essentially Aristotle as interpreted by al-Farabi[35]) transmission, which along with the contributions produced by oral encounters between Christian and Jewish intellectuals together left a deep Farabian imprint.

Al-Farabi's *Letter on Intellect*, translated into Latin as *De intellectu* in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, exerted a major influence among Christian philosophers in late medieval Europe.[36] The treatise

enumerates and elaborates on several senses of "intellect." After briefly mentioning some of these senses as used in ordinary language, the rest of the *Letter* treats the term as used by Aristotle in four of his works. First, al-Farabi briefly discusses "intellect" as a name for the innate or intuitive first principles of reasoning as treated by Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics*. Next, he discusses "intellect" as Aristotle's *phronesis* or practical intelligence, treated in *Nicomachean Ethics*: the ability, acquired through experience over time, to discern between right and wrong actions, to know what things we ought to pursue and what things we ought to avoid—in short, the capacity for virtuous *praxis*. Third, al-Farabi turns to "intellect" in the strict or proper sense—not as a matter of doing or making (*praxis*) but as a matter of knowing (*theoria*), as an end-in-itself. The heart of the treatise follows: four senses of the term "intellect" (*nous*), used (says al-Farabi) by Aristotle in *De anima*, that are bound up with the development and actualization of human knowing. We shall discuss those four senses presently. Finally, the treatise closes with brief discussion of what can most properly be called "Intellect": those metaphysical Intelligences (culminating with the "First Intellect" or the "First Being"—i.e., God) that are superior, in the cosmic ontological hierarchy, to the Active Intellect; according to al-Farabi, this notion of "intellect" is treated by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*.

The four senses of "intellect" (used, says al-Farabi, by Aristotle in *De anima*) that involve human knowing are (1) potential intellect, (2) actual intellect, (3) acquired intellect, (4) the Active Intellect.[37] Let us consider each in order.

The "potential intellect" is the human capacity or power to know the intelligible forms or essences of all species of material (i.e., natural) entities, *prior to* our actually knowing any of those forms:

> The potential intellect is a certain soul, or a part of a soul, or one of the powers of the soul, or a certain thing whose being is prepared or disposed to extract the essential definitions and forms of all existing things from their matters and to make them all a form or forms for itself. Those forms extracted from matter do not become extracted from the matter in which they exist unless they have become forms for the potential intellect. Those forms that are extracted from their matters and become forms in this intellect are the intelligibles.[38]

Al-Farabi is reluctant to say exactly *what* the potential intellect is—or even to assert that it is the kind of thing that has an essence, quiddity or *whatness*. The potential intellect, before intellecting any form, is pure potential: it has no form of its own and so is not anything or not a thing prior to its first act of intellection: "Moreover, the essential form of this intellect does not itself remain so distinct from the forms of the

intelligibles that it and the forms have an individual essence separate from one another; rather, this intellect itself *becomes* those forms."[39] This seems to mean that the potential intellect does not have its own proper essence or any identity as a distinct being outside its potential identity as an actual intellect and (what amounts to the same thing) as an actual intelligible. Here al-Farabi seems to be influenced by a notion inherited from earlier Greek commentators and later emphasized especially by Averroes—namely, that the potential intellect must itself have no form if it is potentially to intellect (and in some sense to become) the intelligible forms of all things. As a general point, we can say that the human intellect makes itself what it (ultimately) *is* through a long process of learning, study, reasoning, through the acquisition and accumulation of knowledge (that is, on the highest level, knowledge of the essences and causes of all beings). I purposefully say that the human intellect "makes itself," since al-Farabi does ascribe at least some portion of *activity* to the potential intellect ("this intellect . . . extracts the forms of existing things"). That the potential intellect actively does the extracting and is somehow active or productive (characteristics of Aristotle's *nous poietikos*) may seem problematic given that the human potential intellect is *not* the Active Intellect. What is the potential intellect's activity and how does it differ from that of the Active Intellect? We shall suggest answers to these questions below. For now, let us say that we have caught a glimpse of what al-Farabi seems to be driving at—namely, that humans can attain their ultimate destiny, can become what they essentially are (or, more precisely, can earn for themselves an essence that is higher than human), only after a long process for which they are to a large extent themselves responsible.

Once the potential intellect has intellected the form of some thing (once it has extracted the intelligible form from a material entity), it is now (at least to some degree) "actual intellect." That is, "actual intellect" is the name for the human intellect insofar as it knows the essence and cause of any species of natural being:

> As long as none of the forms of existing things is in it, it is potential intellect. Then, when the forms of existing things come to be in it . . . , that thing [i.e., the potential intellect] itself becomes an actual intellect. This then is the meaning of "actual intellect." When the intelligibles that it extracts from matters come to be in the intellect, those intelligibles become actual intelligibles, having been potential intelligibles before they were extracted. Once extracted, they become actual intelligibles by virtue of becoming forms for that intellect, and it is precisely by those things that are now actual intelligibles that the intellect becomes an actual intellect. Their being actual intelligibles and its being an actual intellect is, then, one and the same thing.[40]

The potential intellect's complete transformation to actual intellect does not happen all at once. Rather, as it actually intellects more and more potentially intelligible forms, it becomes progressively more and more actual and less and less potential.[41] At this point in the *Letter*, al-Farabi is still treating the process of our gaining more and more knowledge of the essences and causes of physical things, extracting the intelligible forms of entities of the natural world:

> The intelligibles are in the first instance those things that are *potentially* intelligible. Now, before they become actual intelligibles, they are forms in matters outside the soul. When they become actual intelligibles, their mode of being as actual intelligibles is not the same as their mode of being as forms in matters, and their mode of being in themselves as forms in matters is not the same as their mode of being as actual intelligibles. . . . Once the actual intelligibles come to be in the intellect, they come to be at that moment among the existing beings of the [metaphysical] world and are counted, as intelligibles, among the totality of [metaphysical] existing beings. All [physical] existing beings can be intellected and become forms for that [human] intellect.[42]

At first, "in the first instance," the potential intellect comes to intellect "things that are *potentially* intelligible." Al-Farabi cannot be speaking yet about our intellecting separate substances (Intelligences that are always absolutely noncorporeal, never bound up with matter in any way whatsoever), since separate substances in themselves are always actually intelligible. In other words, the potential intellect's noetic curriculum begins with physics (extracting the potentially intelligible forms of hylomorphic entities), not with metaphysics.[43] In the latter part of this passage, al-Farabi indicates that human intellection, in making actual the potentially intelligible form, brings the form into a new and superior mode of existence: the human intellect elevates the enmattered form to a higher ontological status, grants it existence as a metaphysical entity—that is, as pure intellect.[44]

There comes a point after which humans no longer need to turn to the world of natural things to make actual the potentially intelligible enmattered forms, since we have already made all of those forms actual. Now we can just turn to our own actual intellect (which is the same thing as turning to those intelligible forms) to intellect any and every form that our intellection has caused to become an existing being of the intellectual world. When we are able, through self-intellection alone, to intellect the intelligible forms of all natural beings (no longer having any need to extract those forms from their matter), our intellect has become "acquired intellect":

> Now, when it becomes an actual intellect in relation to *all* intelligibles and becomes one of the existing beings by becoming *all* the actual intelligibles, then, whenever it intellects the being that is itself

> an actual intellect, it does not intellect a being outside of itself but rather it intellects its very own self. . . . This is different from the way in which these things themselves were intellected initially; for they were intellected initially due to being extracted from the matters in which they existed as potential intelligibles. They are next intellected—when their existence is not that prior existence but rather is separate from their matters—as forms that are no longer in their matters and as actual intelligibles. So, once the actual intellect intellects the intelligibles that are forms for it as actual intelligibles, this intellect, which we first called the actual intellect, has now become the *acquired intellect*.[45]

Strictly speaking, the human intellect is not a being or substance until it "becomes one of the existing beings" in becoming acquired intellect.[46] In saying that acquired intellect is an "existing being" al-Farabi seems to mean that it is a purely intellectual, noncorporeal, metaphysical entity.[47] As such, it is now incorruptible, immortal—and it is through becoming acquired intellect that the human intellect attains its ultimate happiness in the "afterlife":

> Next, the Active Intellect aims to bring those forms in matter *closer and closer* to the state of separation [from matter] until the acquired intellect comes to be. At that point, the substance of man, or man through that by which he becomes a substance, becomes *the closest thing possible* to the Active Intellect. *This is the ultimate happiness and the afterlife*, which is that the ultimate thing by which man becomes a substance comes about for him, and he attains his final perfection—that is, he performs the ultimate activity by which he becomes a substance. *This is what is meant by the afterlife*.[48]

From the first sentence of this passage, we can see that the Active Intellect clearly plays some role in the coming into existence of the acquired intellect. Al-Farabi is reticent about that role here, and to my knowledge he does not spell it out in precise detail elsewhere. At the same time, the human being also clearly plays an important role, since it is the human being who "performs the ultimate activity by which he becomes a substance." What is this activity and how does it differ from the activity of the Active Intellect?

If becoming acquired intellect is our ultimate happiness and the blissful afterlife, this is not just because we have become pure intellect that, intellecting itself, can intellect the forms of all natural beings; rather, it is that, having become pure intellect, we can now intellect separate substances—entities that, as pure Intelligences, are always absolutely noncorporeal, always separate from matter. Our self-intellection as acquired intellect, by which we intellect the intelligible forms of all natural

beings, is a kind of prelude to our intellecting those beings that never are in matter in any way. There is, however, a key difference between the two phases of intellection: our intellecting the forms of natural beings endows those forms with another mode of existence, bringing them to an ontologically higher level as actual intellect; our intellecting separate substances, on the other hand, has no effect whatsoever on those substances, since they always are just what they are. In other words, the human intellect acts as a cause with respect to the intelligible forms of natural beings but not with respect to separate substances.[49]

Once the human intellect has become acquired intellect, its intellection of separate substances is (al-Farabi seems to say) automatic, coming about without further philosophical work. Complete knowledge of physics turns actual intellect into acquired intellect, and, apparently instantaneously, there is intellection of the metaphysical entities, the separate substances.[50]

What does the human being do insofar as "he performs the ultimate activity by which he becomes a substance"—that is, insofar as he attains the afterlife? This ultimate activity is likely our intellecting the Active Intellect itself and thus our intellecting all that is intellected by the Active Intellect, including all the separate substances (all the Intelligences and God).[51]

Although al-Farabi states that the Active Intellect "makes the potential intellect an actual intellect and . . . makes the potential intelligibles actual intelligibles,"[52] he does not spell out how the Active Intellect does this. But he does present a variation of Aristotle's analogy between the Active Intellect and light (quoted above); for al-Farabi, the Active Intellect is not like light but is like that which gives light—the Sun:

> The relation of the Active Intellect to the potential intellect is like the relation of the Sun to the eye, which is potentially vision as long as it is in darkness, for vision is potentially vision simply as long as it is in darkness. . . . In a similar manner, there comes about in the potential intellect a certain thing whose relation to it is like that of actual transparency to vision. The Active Intellect gives that thing to the potential intellect, whereby it becomes a principle through which the potential intelligibles become actual intelligibles for the intellect. In the same way that the Sun is what gives the eye actual vision and makes potentially visible things actually visible by the light it gives, so too the Active Intellect is what makes the potential intellect an actual intellect by the principle it gives it, and by that same principle the [potential] intelligibles become actual intelligibles.[53]

The Active Intellect's activity as *nous poietikos* is its giving a principle to the potential intellect—a principle that is somehow the cause or reason for potential intelligibles becoming actual intelligibles. The Active Intellect gives the human intellect, initially in a state of darkness, something

like light, some sort of "thing," some principle that somehow enlightens us. This should most definitely not be taken to mean that the Active Intellect gives us those forms to think, that it provides us with the actual intelligibles through direct illumination, through a flow from above.[54] The Active Intellect does not give us the forms directly but gives us a principle by which we can attain intellection; in other words, it gives humans the light of reason. It does not give us truths but it gives us the tools with which we can work to find truths. What al-Farabi probably has in mind here are the first principles—that set of fundamental premises that we always already know with certainty, by intuition, as if by nature (for example, the whole is greater than the part)—along with the power to attain knowledge of intelligibles by putting those first principles to use.[55] He often dwells on the first principles in other works, and he had treated them earlier in the *Letter*.[56] If the "light" and "principle" in question here is indeed the first principles and the power of abstraction, the implication is very important: the Active Intellect provides us with the basic tools and capacity necessary for the acquisition of the intelligible forms of natural beings, but it is up to us to learn how to use those tools and to do the hard work of actually attaining those forms. Although the Active Intellect is an indispensable cause of our intellection, it is a direct, efficient cause only in that it gives us the first principles; it does not give us the actual intelligible forms. Furthermore, the Active Intellect is our final cause, that toward which we ought to aim and that which we aspire to become. But the work of using the first principles to attain our final perfection is done by us and depends on our volition and choice: we must make a determined effort to follow and complete a curriculum of philosophical reasoning, working out demonstratively true syllogisms starting from premises that we innately know to be true.

In *The Political Regime* al-Farabi speaks of the Active Intellect as supervising the human being's attainment of perfection, which is our becoming noncorporeal permanent intellect:

> The proper activity of the Active Intellect is to watch over the rational animal and endeavor to have him reach the highest level of perfection that man can reach, namely, ultimate happiness, which is for man to arrive at the level of the Active Intellect. The way that occurs is by attaining separation from bodies, without needing anything below in order to subsist (whether it be body or matter or accident), and by remaining in that state of perfection forever. Although the Active Intellect itself is singular, its rank nonetheless accommodates whatever part of the rational animal is freed of matter and attains happiness. The Active Intellect ought to be called the "protective spirit" and the "holy spirit"—since it is given names similar to these two—and its rank ought to be called "the heavenly kingdom" and other such names.[57]

Al-Farabi does not regard the Conjunction with the Active Intellect as a mystical union in which the human intellect as acquired intellect would become *identical* to the Active Intellect itself. The Active Intellect "is singular," that is, does not assimilate another entity (namely, "the part of the rational animal . . . freed of matter") into itself; the two do not become essentially the same. Rather, the Conjunction means that the acquired intellect joins the "rank" of, attains the same ontological level, as the Active Intellect.[58] When human potential intellect becomes actual intellect and then acquired intellect, humans come to occupy the lowest rank of intellectual beings, the rank that they now share with the Active Intellect. Although humans, having attained their perfection, remain different from, they are not ontologically lower than the Active Intellect. Al-Farabi insists on this equality of rank in order to avoid violating the philosophical principle that an ontologically higher being does not serve an ontologically lower one. If the Active Intellect acts for the sake of humans (it "watches over the rational animal" and "endeavors" for its happiness), it does so for the sake of humans as acquired intellect, that is, for the sake of its ontological equal. At the end of this passage we witness an example of al-Farabi's treatment of religious discourse as symbolic representation, meant for the masses, of truths that are first acquired by the philosopher through reasoning and speculation: "heaven" is a name for the ontological rank of the lowest among the purely intellectual beings, and "holy spirit" is a name for the Active Intellect.

The *Political Regime* emphasizes the Active Intellect's activity as the maker of intelligibles for us and as the cause of our becoming actual and acquired intellect:

> The Active Intellect both intellects the First [i.e., God], all of the secondary causes [i.e., Intelligences], and itself, as well as makes intelligibles of things that are not in themselves intelligibles [i.e., of natural things]. . . . The Active Intellect is what makes them actual intelligibles and makes some of them [i.e., some humans] actual intellects by raising them from their level of existence to a level *higher than the one given them by nature*. For example, *the rational faculty, by virtue of which man is man*, is not in its substance an actual intellect and *was not given by nature to be an actual intellect*; instead, the Active Intellect causes it to become an actual intellect and makes everything else an actual intelligible for the rational faculty. . . . At that point, the thing that intellects, the thing that is intellected, and the act of intellection is one and the same thing. It is as a result of this that [the human intellect] arrives at the rank of the Active Intellect. Once man arrives at this rank, his happiness is perfect.[59]

Despite repeated insistence *that* the Active Intellect is maker of our intelligibles and cause of our intellection, there is no real explanation of

this activity. We do find the expression of a thought of fundamental importance for later *falasifa* and that will play a key role in our exegesis of Cavalcanti and Dante: *The rational faculty, by virtue of which man is man*, is not in its substance an actual intellect and *was not given by nature to be an actual intellect*. What makes a human being human is the rational faculty, not the attainment of actual intellection. A human being can be fully human without ever becoming actually intellectual; indeed, *human beings essentially are, by nature, not actually intellectual*. This does not mean that the essential nature of human beings *qua* human is the capacity or potential for intellection; rather, it means that the essential human nature is the potential for exercising rationality. We detect here a distinction between human reason and intellection: *man as man is a rational not an intellectual animal*. This distinction between natural human reason and actual intellect will later be fully exploited by Averroes, and it is, as we shall see, the cornerstone of the thinking that underlies Cavalcanti's poetry. A human *qua* human, al-Farabi says here, is a substance, the essential form of which is rationality—and this essential form is fully autonomous, complete without reference to intellection, not merely an initial stage in a process that will lead to the attainment of actual intellect.

What are we to make of the fact that al-Farabi speaks of man as being a substance outside of any reference to intellection, whereas he also says (as we saw above) that a human only becomes a substance upon becoming acquired intellect? These statements are only non-contradictory if al-Farabi implicitly views "human" as an equivocal term, that is, as a name for two different species of being. There is the natural human and the angelic human; the one can indeed become the other, but this becoming is a transformation, a change from being a natural substance to being a metaphysical substance, not simply the natural development of a single substance to its perfection. For in fact, al-Farabi implies, there are two human perfections: the perfection of the natural human, which is the actual exercise of the rational faculty; the perfection of the angelic human, which is the actual attainment of potential intellection. This calls to mind the "two suns," the "two roads," so central to Dante's *Comedy*. Dante names these two kinds of humans "human" and "transhuman," and he embodies this distinction in the rational Virgil, guiding to the summit of Mount Purgatory, and the intellectual Beatrice, guiding toward the high point of Heaven.

In *The Political Regime* we find again the analogy between the Active Intellect and the Sun, in a passage that helps us determine with more confidence the precise nature of the Active Intellect's activity with respect to human intellection:

> The status of the Active Intellect in relation to man is like that of the Sun to vision. The Sun gives light to vision, and by the light acquired from the Sun vision actually sees, when before it had only the

> potential to see. By that light, vision sees the Sun itself, which is the cause of its actually seeing, and furthermore actually sees the colors that previously were only potentially the objects of vision. The vision that was potential thereby becomes actual. In the same manner, the Active Intellect provides man with something that it imprints in his rational faculty. The relation of that thing to the rational soul is like that of light to vision. It is by reason of this thing that the . . . soul intellects the Active Intellect, that the things that are potentially intelligible become actually intelligible, and that man, who was potentially an intellect, becomes actually and perfectly an intellect, until he *all but reaches the rank* of the Active Intellect. So man becomes an intellect *per se* after he was not, and an intelligible *per se* after he was not, and a divine substance after having been a material one. This is the *activity* proper to the Active Intellect, and this is why it is called the Active Intellect.[60]

The Active Intellect is the ultimate cause of our intellection (as the Sun is the ultimate source of the illumination of our vision), but the direct cause of our intellection is something analogous to light imprinted in our intellect. This "something" that the Active Intellect imprints in our intellect allows us to intellect the potential intelligibles and the Active Intellect itself. The power that "lights up" intelligibles comes from the superlunary realm above, but that power acts as something that we possess and use down here on earth. Al-Farabi does not at all suggest that the Active Intellect's activity is its illuminating us directly; rather, it is the distant source of the ambient light by which we see. It does not give us the intelligibles; it gives us a power through which we may attain them. The Active Intellect is no doubt active—imprinting that "something" is its *activity*—but al-Farabi leaves much room for our own doing, for *our* activity in using that power. More than that, he insists that humans *must* exercise their own intellectual power if they are to attain that state of felicity that religious discourse represents imaginatively as salvation, the eternal bliss of the afterlife in Paradise. His assertion that humans are at first a material substance not a divine one, not an intellect, implies that we are by nature mortal, not naturally endowed with an immortal soul. No humans who do not complete a thorough philosophical curriculum in physics (and, consequent upon that, in metaphysics) will go to Heaven; but neither will they go to Hell, since their fate upon death will simply be that they cease to exist.[61]

The notion of an exclusively intellectual "afterlife" is not al-Farabi's only teaching on the subject. In *The Political Regime* al-Farabi paints a different picture of what he calls "the true ultimate happiness that is the purpose of the Active Intellect." There he asserts that *all* citizens of the virtuous city—not just fully accomplished philosophers—enjoy a felicitous afterlife, although there is a hierarchy of degrees of felicity in

heaven, determined by the degree of intellection that is attained in carrying out one's civic function: the philosopher (who for al-Farabi is also the prophet-lawgiver) enjoys greater pleasure in the afterlife than does the street-sweeper. Groups or guilds of like-functioning kindred citizens assume in heaven the same political/social ranks (which are at the same time epistemological ranks) they occupied on earth—philosophers enjoying eternal bliss with other philosophers, administrators with other administrators, warriors with other warriors, street-sweepers with other street-sweepers. When one generation of those who perform a particular political function (e.g., lawgiving, jurisprudence, oratory, pharmacology, cloth-making) passes away, it joins the souls of the past generations that have performed that same function.

To these two obviously contradictory teachings, we must add a third, since, as mentioned above, al-Farabi was reputed to have said that happiness exists only in this life and that "everything else that is spoken of is nothing but drivel and old wives' tales." Here one might ask whether it is possible to reconcile al-Farabi's three mutually exclusive teachings on the possibility and nature of an afterlife for humans: that only philosophers who transform their potential intellect into actual intellect and then into acquired intellect gain an afterlife; that all citizens of the virtuous city, from the highest ruler (the philosopher-prophet-lawgiver) to the most humble servant, enjoy a felicitous afterlife; that there is no afterlife whatsoever, and all claims that there is an afterlife are mere fictions. It is certainly possible that al-Farabi, in differing contexts, would have maintained all three of these positions, since arguably he placed primacy on political philosophy over metaphysics and thus would not be averse to using metaphysical doctrines that are not demonstrably true to serve (in the mode of rhetoric) the purposes of his political philosophy.[62] If it is not unwarranted to recognize the second position (an afterlife for all citizens) as a rhetorical rather than a demonstrably true claim (since such a position is not in accord with the preponderance of al-Farabi's philosophical assertions),[63] it is probably impossible to tell whether the first or the third view (an afterlife only for those who have transformed themselves into acquired intellect or no afterlife whatsoever) best represents al-Farabi's authentic thinking on this question. In other words, does he really think that one's philosophizing can transform one's potential intellect into acquired intellect, upon which transformation one gains the "ultimate happiness" of the "heavenly kingdom" and the immortal "afterlife"? Although he does say something to this effect on several occasions, he nearly always stops short of saying that there is a full-blown Conjunction, a union or identity of acquired intellect and Active Intellect, and he sometimes denies that we can ever become a separate substance (i.e., an intellect). Instead, al-Farabi writes that the perfected human intellect "all but reaches the rank of" and "comes close to being the substance of" the Active

Intellect (that rank being the lowest level of separate [i.e., nonmaterial] entities in the cosmic hierarchy). Or, he characterizes the Active Intellect as "an example to follow in what [a human] labors at, until he comes as close to it as he possibly can"[64] (thus suggesting that one cannot actually reach it); the philosopher "attempts to approach" the Active Intellect until he is conjoined with it "in some manner." When the potential intellect has become completely perfected, in its blissful afterlife as acquired intellect, it "very much resembles the separate [i.e., nonmaterial, purely intellectual] things"—which amounts to saying that it is not itself one of those things and that it retains at least traces of materiality. This abundance of qualifiers leads us to suspect that the Conjunction with the Active Intellect, the Salvation that is a human's eschatological goal according to the religion of the philosophers, is for al-Farabi an unattainable ideal: we ought to aim for it even though we will never achieve it. At any rate, we already witness in al-Farabi the ambivalence concerning the possibility of the Salvation of Intellect (the Conjunction with the Active Intellect) that will continue to mark the tradition of Arabic rationalism as it proceeds into the Islamic West and then is assimilated into Hebrew, Latin, and eventually vernacular European intellectual circles from the twelfth through the sixteenth century. There are both optimist and pessimist stances (sometimes within the work of a single thinker) with respect to the possibility of the Conjunction. For true believers in the religion of the philosophers, it is a very real possibility and a firm hope. Pessimists, one the other hand, acknowledge that *if* there were immortal bliss for humans it could only be as indicated by al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, Averroes, and Maimonides—*but* in fact there is no such thing.

Avicenna on the Conjunction

The fundamentals of Al-Farabi's thinking were developed into a completely coherent and in many ways original system by the illustrious Persian Avicenna (Ibn Sina; b. AD 980 near Bukhara, modern-day Uzbekistan, d. AD 1037 in Hamadan, Northern Persia)—"the first philosopher ever to write about *all philosophical knowledge* within a single composition as a unified whole."[65] Avicenna's monumental work, *The Cure* (also known as *The Healing* [*Al-Shifă*]), an exhaustive and masterful treatment of virtually all branches of philosophy, was very well-known, both criticized and celebrated, in the Latin West.[66] In *Comedy* Dante honors Avicenna by numbering him among the great philosophers—along with Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and several others, including Averroes—dwelling in Limbo.

Avicenna regards the human rational soul as possessing what he likens to "two faces," one (involving *praxis*) directed downward toward the sublunary world, governing the human body and its actions, the other

(involving *theoria*) directed upward toward the superlunary world of intelligible universals:

> The human rational soul . . . is divisible into a practical and a theoretical faculty, both of which are equivocally called intelligence. The practical faculty is the principle of movement of the human body, which urges it to individual actions characterized by deliberation and in accordance with purposive considerations. . . . With the help of the theoretical intelligence, [the practical faculty] forms the ordinary and commonly accepted opinions concerning actions, as, for instance, that lies and tyranny are evil and other similar premises which, in books of logic, have been clearly distinguished from the purely rational ones [i.e., from premises that are known with certainty]. . . . The reason why morals are attributed to this faculty is that the human soul . . . is a single substance which is related to two planes—the one higher and the other lower than itself. It has special faculties which establish the relationship between itself and each plane: the practical faculty which the human soul posseses in relation to the lower plane, which is the body, and its control and management; and the theoretical faculty in relation to the higher plane, from which it passively receives and acquires intelligibles.[67]

The human rational soul occupies a unique rank in the ontological hierarchy of the cosmos: it is poised right on the threshold between the divine and the natural realms. Avicenna indicates that only in a loose manner of speaking can the soul's practical faculty be called "intelligence"; strictly speaking, intelligence has no material elements or entanglements whatsoever (and so only the theoretical faculty is properly called "intellect"), whereas the practical face of the soul is in effect one of the "bodily faculties"—not only because it operates with embodied powers such as imagination, but also because its scope of concern involves concrete particulars rather than abstract universals. The practical faculty deliberates on actions involving choices based on opinions and beliefs derived from premises lacking the certainty that marks the premises grounding demonstrative science. It distinguishes between good and evil in the realm of ethics, not between true and false in the realm of science.[68] After the death of the body, the human rational soul no longer makes any choices, no longer performs any actions, and so no longer has any use for the practical faculty. So, Avicenna's doctrine of the immortality of the rational soul is for all intents and purposes an assertion of the immortality of the theoretical intellect, and in our present discussion "rational soul" may for the most part be taken as a synonym for that intellect.[69]

Uniquely among the major *falasifa*, Avicenna teaches that the human soul is, by its very nature, immortal. The soul's eternal afterlife is a

natural given, not something only attainable through the Conjunction with the Active Intellect. He explicitly rejects any notion of an ontological transformation from human to transhuman, from mortal to immortal, since he insists that no human souls are mortal.

Unlike Aristotle, for whom the human soul is the form of the body and so does not ever exist without it, Avicenna maintains that the human soul exists by itself, even if for a time at least it is necessarily associated with the body. Unlike Plato, Avicenna insists that the soul does not preexist the body:

> This rational soul is a substance subsisting by itself and is imprinted neither in a human body nor in any other corporeal entity. On the contrary, it is separable and abstracted from material and corporeal entities. It has a certain association with the human body as long as the person is alive, but this association is not like the relation of a thing to its receptacle; it is, rather, like the relation of a wielder of an instrument to the instrument. This substance comes into existence together with the body, not before, but it does not perish when the body perishes and dies; it survives, rather, as it was, except that it attains, after its association with the body is severed, either bliss and pleasure or misery and pain.[70]

The rational soul both does not and does have a necessary attachment to its body. The soul "necessitates" the body, in the sense that it *needs* the body due to its unique ontological status as the only purely intellectual (i.e., noncorporeal) substance that is not entirely perfect from the moment of its creation. Although the rational soul's perfection is its becoming a purely intellectual world,[71] it cannot do so without making use of its body.[72] As a preliminary phase in its eventual acquisition of intelligible forms, the soul relies upon the use of various corporeal powers, referred to by Avicenna as "animal faculties," such as imagination and estimation; these lower powers are located in physical organs and are thus mortal and so, after performing their functions sufficiently, expendable.

Avicenna states that there is a single universal essence (or, form) of the human soul, but he also asserts that the actual form of a specific human soul is itself specific, rendered such by its affiliation with its particular body. The universal essence of the human soul exists only as an idea or concept; it is not an actually existing substance. But although there is only one idea or concept of the human soul, actual human souls are individuated to such an extent that Avicenna speaks of human souls as differing from one another in essence, each having "the essence that is properly one's own."[73] Avicenna has it both ways: there is only one idea of the human soul (an idea that exists in concept only), but there is in effect a multiplicity of human species, a diversity of human souls

that have been rendered particular in essence by the fact of having been enmattered. From its inception each individual human soul is essentially different from all others due to its association with its own particular body. Although the soul itself is in no way corporeal and is not imprinted in matter, the individuality of its essence is never effaced, and the soul retains its specific diversity even after the body ceases to exist. This is the basis for Avicenna's unabashed conviction that some humans are naturally fit for certain perfections that others by nature cannot possibly attain—in short, that there are various species of humans.[74]

Recall that al-Farabi's *Letter on Intellect* enumerates four senses of "intellect" that pertain to human knowing and that, he says, Aristotle discusses in *De anima*. These four senses are (1) potential intellect, (2) actual intellect, (3) acquired intellect, (4) the Active Intellect. "Potential intellect" is the human power to know the intelligible forms of all species of material (i.e., natural) entities, *prior to* our actually knowing any of those forms; it is in effect the epistemological faculty with which humans are endowed in their infancy. "Actual intellect" is the name for the human intellect insofar as, having abstracted the intelligible form from a material entity, it knows the essence and cause of some species of natural being. "Acquired intellect" is the ontological status (a transformation from mortal to immortal, from a natural to a divine entity) that we attain when we are able, through self-intellection alone, to intellect the intelligible forms of all or most natural beings, no longer having any need to extract those forms from their matter—a status that triggers our intellection of separate substances (Intelligences). The Active Intellect is not human but is an eternally perfect, divine entity, the lowest in the hierarchy of cosmic Intelligences; it supervises the human being's attainment of perfection, watching "over the rational animal and endeavor[ing] to have him reach the highest level of perfection that man can reach, namely, ultimate happiness, which is for man to arrive at the level of the Active Intellect"—doing so by giving humans a principle that "makes the potential intellect an actual intellect and . . . makes the potential intelligibles actual intelligibles."

Avicenna also speaks of four meanings of "intellect" pertaining to human knowing, although his scheme differs significantly from al-Farabi's. The first key difference is that for Avicenna all four are stages of *human* theoretical intellect (whereas al-Farabi's fourth term, the Active Intellect, is a nonhuman superlunary Intelligence, and his third term, "acquired intellect," indicates a superhuman status that is ontologically comparable in rank to the Active Intellect). The second key difference involves a complete revision of the notion of "acquired intellect": for Avicenna, as we shall see below, the human intellect does not acquire intelligible forms in a manner that would involve its possessing those forms or knowing those forms by knowing itself, nor is there any sort of ontological transformation involved. The event of "acquired intellect"

does not turn a human into an immortal separate substance, since all humans are by nature immortal separate substances; rather, it is a discrete temporal event repeated each time that the human intellect contemplates an intelligible form.

In *The Salvation* Avicenna presents a concise account of the four stages or modes of human theoretical intellect. He begins with an analogy to four stages in a human's relation to the activity of writing words with ink on a page. First is a stage of "absolute potentiality in which nothing has yet become actual nor has the instrument of its actualization even been achieved, for instance the capacity of an infant to write."[75] At this stage, the infant knows nothing about writing and has no ability to write, yet as a human being may possibly learn and master the art of writing in the future. Second is a stage when "nothing more than the instrument of the acquisition of actuality has been achieved": for example, "an older child who has learnt the use of the pen and the inkpot and knows the value or meaning of the letters is said to have the capacity of writing." At this stage the child has learned the mechanics of writing but has not yet learned enough to combine letters into words, words into phrases, phrases into sentences, etc. Third is the stage "when the instrument has been perfected, and by means of the instrument the capacity has been made complete, so that the agent may exercise it whenever he wishes without having to learn or acquire it": for example, the capacity "possessed by a scribe who has reached perfection in his art, even when he is not actually writing." The scribe could write an extended composition if he wished to, although he may not be doing so at the present time. Avicenna leaves out the fourth stage of the analogy, although it is strongly implied: the scribe when he is actually in the process of writing.

The first of the four stages of human theoretical intellect, analogous to the infant who knows nothing about writing, is called the "material intellect" (*intellectus materialis*). This does not mean that this stage of intellect is enmattered (it never is) but rather that it is a state of absolute potential, like raw matter before it has received any form (and so before it has become any actual entity).[76] The second stage, analogous to the child familiar with the rudimentary tools of writing, is the intellect's possessing the first principles, the basic intuitively known premises that will later be put to use in constructing logical demonstrations that will yield scientific knowledge; this is called "habitual intellect" (*intellectus in habitu*).[77] The third stage, analogous to the scribe who has mastered his art and could write if he wished, is when the intellect has attained scientific knowledge of intelligible forms but is not presently contemplating any of those forms, which are in some sense available for future use; this is called "actual intellect" (*intellectus in actu*/*in effectu*).[78] The fourth mode, called "acquired intellect" (*intellectus acquisitus*), is when the intellect "actually contemplates and thinks" intelligible forms and "also knows that it does so." This mode is enabled "only through an intellect which

is always actual" (i.e., the Active Intellect) and only when the human intellect "makes some sort of contact [*aliquo modo coniunctionis*—some mode of conjunction]" with the Active Intellect. In that Conjunction, "certain forms are actually imprinted on the [human intellect] from the [Active Intellect]; such forms are therefore acquired from without (*ab extrinsecus*)." With the Conjunction, "the animal genus and the human species are perfected, and here human potentiality becomes at one with the first principles of all existence [i.e., with the Intelligences—*not* the intuitively known basic premises mentioned above]."[79]

For al-Farabi "acquired intellect" is the name for the superhuman ontological status that the human intellect attains by transcending its humanity and joining the ranks of the divine separate substances. Al-Farabi suggests that this is a one-time event that happens when the human intellect has abstracted and intellected all or most of the intelligible forms of physical entities and thus triggers for itself the intellection of the Active Intellect and the other Intelligences. This event is "Salvation," the entry into "Paradise," the transformation of the no longer human intellect into an entity belonging to the realm of metaphysical reality, outside of time and space. There is nothing left for this intellect to do, no further philosophical labor—although the still living human person is charged with the task of founding a prophetic religion or communicating to other humans through imaged discourse. For Avicenna "acquired intellect" is much different, less lofty, and quite straightforward: it is the name for the philosopher's activity when he is actually thinking a logically derivable scientific truth concerning some aspect of reality or some genus or species of entity. This activity is that of a purely human being who remains always purely human: Avicenna thoroughly rejects the idea that any substance can ever transform into a different substance or into a substance of a different species.[80] For Avicenna, the activity that is called "acquired intellect" does not entail the human intellect's changing from a physical (material) to a metaphysical (nonmaterial) substance, since the human intellect (indeed, the human soul) is *always* a nonmaterial ("separate") substance.

What, then, is "acquired" in the activity of the human intellect's thinking scientific thoughts? For a long time, Avicenna scholars shared a consensus view most notably put forth by the great historian of medieval philosophy Etienne Gilson. In a lengthy article published in 1930, Gilson identifies a current of late medieval Latin philosophy that he called "augustinisme avicennisant" ("Avicennizing Augustinianism"). Gilson refers to several late medieval philosophers who strongly favored Augustine (with his emphasis on the necessity of Christian faith) over Aristotle (with his confidence in the powers of human reason) and who were able to buttress their teachings by invoking the authority of Avicenna in certain matters concerning the soul, its immortality, and its acquisition of knowledge of truth. Gilson aims to show that these philosophers think that both Augustine and Avicenna maintain that humans can know the

truth concerning reality only because God (or, in Avicenna's case, an emanating series of Intelligences ultimately caused by and anchored in God) directly illuminates or infuses truth in the human soul; without this illumination, there can be no human science of reality. Gilson's article is still valuable insofar as it accurately presents certain late medieval thinkers who regarded Avicenna as offering a quasi-Augustinian epistemology. There is no doubt that Avicenna was much less harshly received than Averroes, somewhat later, would be, since Avicenna does sometimes speak of an illumination from above that was amenable to Christianization. Gilson asserts that

> for Avicenna as for Augustine, everything known by the human intellect presupposes the activity of the divine light. . . . The two philosophers agree in considering the [humanly known] intelligibles as received from above. . . . All knowledge is an illumination, says Avicenna.[81]

According to Gilson, Avicenna bequeathed to late medieval Latin scholastics "a doctrine of illumination according to which the intelligible forms—that is, concepts—are conferred upon the human intellect from above."[82] Until recently, the consensus view of Avicenna's position on the soul's acquisition of knowledge of intelligible forms was in line with Gilson's; in this view, philosophizing is a labor of preparation, a training (not unlike an athlete's working out and practicing) through which the philosopher's soul is getting fit, disposing itself to receive an illumination—making itself worthy and able to receive the intelligible forms, which are then emanated down to that soul from the Active Intellect. The philosopher himself cannot complete the abstraction of intelligible forms, although he can come close to doing so; when he has come sufficiently close, he receives ("acquires") those abstract forms from the metaphysical realm above.

In the past three decades, this view has been challenged, if not thoroughly refuted. At the very least, there is now a debate in Avicenna scholarship between those who maintain that the philosopher through his own activity alone cannot acquire knowledge of the intelligible forms but must rely upon emanation from the Active Intellect and those who maintain that the philosopher's own activity of abstraction yields fully adequate knowledge of those forms.[83] This division into "emanationist" and "abstractionist" interpretations of Avicenna's epistemology is understandable, given that he often uses language that might support either view. In *The Salvation*, for instance, he speaks of both the human soul's active abstraction and passive reception of intelligible forms:

> The function of the theoretical faculty [i.e., the human intellect] is to receive the impressions of the universal forms abstracted from

> matter. If these forms are already abstract in themselves [i.e., if they are universals intellected by metaphysical entities, separate substances], it simply receives them; if not, it makes them immaterial by abstraction, so that no trace whatever of material attachments remains in them.[84]

Here the human intellect both "receives" and "makes" universal forms—it is both passive and active. One *could* attempt to explain this ambivalence as determined by the difference between the forms of physical entities and the universals known by Intelligences (although as we will see below this is not the case). Since separate substances (Intelligences) are pure, never enmattered forms, the human intellect could not possibly know them by abstraction, which is denuding an intelligible form of all its material accidents and aspects; here Avicenna speaks of the soul's science of such substances as "reception." As for the enmattered forms of natural entities, the human intellect—clearly the agent of its science of physics—"makes them immaterial by abstraction." But this is what the previously prevailing consensus view *à la* Gilson denies; in that view there is no human science of any universal concepts (including the intelligible forms of physical entities) without illumination from the Active Intellect, and the most the philosopher can do is make his intellect fit to receive, passively, such illumination.

In *Pointers and Reminders*, Avicenna asserts, nearly unequivocally, that the human intellect actively abstracts the essential form. In this passage he uses the example of an individual human with whom one is acquainted ("Zaid") to indicate a particular individual, with its various accidents (i.e., nonessential aspects); through abstracting, the human intellect is able to strip away these accidents to attain knowledge of the essential form of the species to which the individual belongs:

> Sometimes a thing is perceived via sense-perception when it is observed; then it is imagined, when it is absent in reality, through the representation of its form inside, just as Zaid, for example, whom you have seen, but now is absent from you, is imagined by you. And sometimes the thing is apprehended intellectually when the concept "man," for example, which exists also for other people, is formed out of Zaid. When the thing is perceptible to the senses, it is found covered by things which are foreign to its essence and which, if they had been removed from it, would not affect its core essence. As, for instance, with its place, position, quality, and quantity itself: if something else [i.e., someone other than Zaid] had been imagined in their place, it would not affect the reality of the essence of its humanity.
>
> Sense-perception grasps the concept insofar as it is buried in these accidents that cling to it because of the matter out of which it is made

> without abstracting it from matter. . . . As to the internal faculty of imagination, it imagines the concept together with these accidents, without being able to entirely abstract it from them. . . . Imagination represents the form [although still with accidents] of the thing despite the absence of the form's outside carrier.
>
> As for the human intellect, it is able to abstract the essence which is enclosed in extraneous accidents that individuate it, securing it as if the intellect were acting upon the sense-perceptible form in a way that would make it intelligible.[85]

I say "nearly unequivocally," because in the last sentence of this passage Avicenna says that the human intellect "is able to abstract the essence . . . *as if* [it] were acting upon the sense-perceptible form" in a way that would yield the intelligible form: the question remains as to whether the human intellect really does act in such a way or rather passively receives the intelligible.

A passage from Avicenna's earliest philosophical treatise, *Compendium on the Soul*, will help us sort out this ambivalence:

> This faculty [the rational soul as material—i.e., potential—intellect], which exists in the entire human species, does not in itself possess any intelligible forms, but these rather come about within it in one of two ways. The first is through divine inspiration, without any process of learning or utilization of the senses, as is the case with the self-evident intelligibles like our conviction that the whole is greater than the part and that two contraries cannot be present in a single thing simultaneously. All adults with a sound intellect may attain these forms.
>
> The second way is to acquire [them] through syllogisms and discover them through demonstration, as is the case with: [Logic; Physics; Mathematics; Metaphysics].[86]

Intelligible forms come about "within" the rational soul—there is no indication that they are conferred from the outside. Notice that the role played by "divine inspiration" here is limited to its providing first principles (e.g., our conviction that the whole is greater than the part). In the rest of this brief chapter—a succinct enumeration of the subject matter of the whole of philosophy—there is no mention of any other case of divine inspiration. The distinction here is between what we naturally know without study (first principles) and what we know through study and syllogistic demonstration. This view of the human acquisition of intelligibles is akin to what we found in al-Farabi: the Active Intellect gives us the tools with which to think but does not do our thinking for us.

Lest this be thought an early view that Avicenna will revise in his later philosophy, the following passage from the mature work *The Salvation*

unequivocally asserts that the rational soul all by itself can acquire intelligible truths:

> [It is an] evident fact that the acquisition of intelligible truths comes about only when the middle term of a syllogism is obtained. This middle term may be obtained in two ways: sometimes through correct guessing,[87] which is a mental act by means of which the mind discovers the middle term all by itself—acumen being the power of correct guessing—and sometimes through instruction, the origins of which are again correct guessing, since doubtless everything is ultimately reduced to knowledge derived from correct guesses handed down by those who first discovered them to their students. It is possible, therefore, that correct guessing may occur to a man by himself, and that the syllogism may be constructed in his mind without a teacher.[88]

Here Avicenna does not bother to mention first principles; the two ways in this passage are learning from a teacher and discovering for oneself. Clearly the human mind all by itself can discover intelligible truths without the aid of illumination from above.

The rational soul discovers intelligible truths by guessing correctly the middle term. What is a middle term? A simple example—Aristotle's famous syllogism: "All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Socrates is mortal"—will help explain. The three components of this syllogism are the major premise ("All men are mortal"), the minor premise ("Socrates is a man"), and the conclusion ("Socrates is mortal"). The major premise of a syllogism contains the predicate of the conclusion—in this case, "being mortal"; it often operates on a level of higher generality than the minor premise—in this case it states something that pertains to *all* men. The minor premise contains the subject of the conclusion—in this case, "Socrates"; it often makes a claim regarding a particular—in this case the individual man Socrates. The middle term of this syllogism—the element shared by both the major and the minor premise—is "being a man." The middle term is the explanation (the cause or reason for) of the conclusion: Socrates is mortal *because he is a man*. For Avicenna, philosophy is in effect the search for middle terms:

> Mind is a faculty of the soul that is ready and predisposed to acquire terms of syllogisms and ideas. . . . Guessing correctly is an accurate and spontaneous movement of this faculty toward tracking down the middle term, as, for example, when one sees that the moon is bright, according to its phases, only on the side that faces the sun, and his mind tracks down a middle term by means of guessing, namely that the cause of its brightness comes from the sun.[89]

The syllogism that Avicenna has in mind here is the following[90]:

> Major premise: Everything whose cause of light is the sun shines only on the side facing the sun.
> Minor premise: The moon has the sun as the cause of its light.
> Conclusion: The moon shines only on the side facing the sun.

The major premise contains the conclusion's predicate ("shines only on the side facing the sun") and is general ("everything"); the minor premise contains the conclusion's subject ("the moon") and is particular. Here the middle term (what the human intellect seeks in its search for knowledge) is "having the sun as the cause of light"; it is "middle" in the sense that it is present in both the major and the minor premise. What is yielded by the middle term is the *cause* (the "reason for"), the scientific explanation that answers the question, "Why does the moon shine only on the side facing the sun?" (Answer: "Because the sun is the cause of its light.") Finding the middle term, then, is not so much a logical operation meant to prove a conclusion as it is the very goal of constructing the syllogism. One can be (and often or usually is) familiar with the conclusion without knowing the middle term; the conclusion is not what one is looking for—one wants to know the cause: the middle term. Without the middle term one has belief but not knowledge. Hence Avicenna regards the acquisition of scientific knowledge—the very goal of philosophy—as the discovery of middle terms, and "acquired intellect" is nothing other than the human rational soul thinking a thought that it has acquired as a middle term.[91]

Still, Avicenna does speak of the human acquisition of intelligibles as requiring an illumination from above, as the reception of a flux that emanates from the Active Intellect. In *Discussions* he literally says that middle terms only come from divine effluence:

> Middle terms and what is analogous to them are not acquired by means of thinking in the same way as one acquires something whose location and method of acquisition are known, but rather in the way in which one prepares a snare to track down whatever may happen to fly in the vicinity of the possible. . . . Had their acquisition come about in the former way, then one would have been able to reach the middle terms whenever one wished. To the contrary, thinking is a kind of entreaty which paves the way for the response, or for the reception of the effluence which corresponds to the two extreme terms of a syllogism. . . . Middle terms come only from divine effluence. Sometimes they come through correct guessing, without thinking having inspected any such correspondences, and sometimes they come without any attention having been paid even to the two extreme terms. The less a soul travels in the realm of the intelligibles,

> the less it can track down middle terms and their likes, while the more practice it has with such traveling, the more successful it is with tracking them down and the easier it is for them to come suddenly upon the soul. . . . This tracking down is nothing else but a kind of contact [Conjunction] of the soul with [the Intelligences].[92]

There is not, however, an insoluble contradiction in Avicenna's epistemology between the human intellect's active abstraction, all by itself, of intelligibles and its passive reception of intelligibles emanated from the Active Intellect. Whereas Fazlur Rahman remarked that Avicenna's language of abstraction is only a *façon de parler*, in fact it is the language of emanation that turns out to be the mere figure of speech, as we will see presently.

Avicenna's philosophy is a coherent whole, a system with a high degree of internal consistency. His psychology, including his epistemology of the rational soul, fits within that whole: it cannot and does not violate the system's fundamental metaphysical principles. One of those principles is that Intelligences are always absolutely actual: they have no element of potentiality and thus never change. Stated differently, this means that Intelligences (including the Active Intellect) never *do* anything, in the sense of performing a new action that they are not always actually performing; what they are always actually doing is thinking/knowing. The Active Intellect is a light that is always turned on. It does not provide illumination to the human intellect sometimes, when the time is right, but not at other times—nor does it distinguish between humans, illuminating some intellects and not others. It does not wait to activate an individual human's intellect until the moment when that human will have sufficiently prepared his intellect to be disposed to receive illumination. Or, as Dimitri Gutas puts this: for Avicenna "emanation, precisely because it is an ontological principle and not a psychological or epistemological one, is inert; it must be 'activated' by [human] thinking."[93] Gutas, whose monumental and magisterial *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* is—with its truly exhaustive philological expertise and its formulation of a radical interpretive paradigm shift—a perhaps unparalleled study of a major philosopher, goes very far in denying that Avicenna thinks that the human intellect is not empowered to attain knowledge of intelligibles all by itself:

> [Avicenna's] wording . . . of this acquisition of knowledge by the human intellect—"contact [Conjunction] with the Active Intellect," or receiving the "divine effluence"—has misled students of Avicenna into thinking that this "flow" of knowledge from the divine to the human intellect is automatic and due to God's grace, or ineffable and mystical. But this is groundless; the "flow" has nothing mystical about it; it just means that the intelligibles are permanently available

> to human intellects who seek a middle term or other intelligibles at the end of a thinking process by means of abstraction and syllogisms. Avicenna is quite explicit about the need for the human intellect to be prepared and demand to hit upon a middle term or actively seek an intelligible in order to receive it: "The active principle [i.e., the Active Intellect] lets flow upon the human rational soul form after form *in accordance with the demand by the soul*; and when the soul turns away from [the Active Intellect], then the effluence is broken off."[94]

A light that is always turned on, the Active Intellect does nothing but shine incessantly; the change and new activity belong entirely to the human intellect: it sometimes turns toward the Active Intellect and at other times turns away. When the rational soul is contemplating a universal intelligible truth, it is turned toward the light; when it is not, it is turned away from the light.[95] The human intellect must perform an act of thinking each time that it seeks illumination. The human intellect is not a receptacle in which intelligible forms might be stored but a mirror which, when turned toward the place of the Active Intellect, reflects the resplendent forms that are contained there.[96] "Acquired intellect" is the name for the rational soul's thinking when it is turned toward the light:

> What Avicenna's numerous statements in this regard make absolutely clear is that the "divine effluence" is never automatic and never initiated by the Active Intellect; as a matter of fact, the whole concept of the emanation of the intelligibles is never developed in Avicenna beyond this mere description, while the reasoning process culminating in the discovery of the middle term is analyzed thoroughly and in depth in a number of works. From this point of view, the Active Intellect appears to serve no other purpose than to be the depository of the middle-term intelligibles; otherwise it is completely inert in the process of human intellection.[97]

Hitting upon the middle term, the rational soul experiences what might be called a "light-bulb moment," a sense that one has been suddenly enlightened, when one can now see what was not previously visible, know what was previously unknown.[98] Avicenna says that such an experience makes one *believe* that knowledge has reached the soul via divine effluence—with the suggestion that this is not actually the case:

> Among people there is a person who needs a teacher for most things, being completely incapable of any correct guesses—or even worse, he might be incapable of understanding even with a teacher; there may be a person who knows most things by guessing correctly the middle term and has slight need for a teacher; and there may also be

> a person, though rarely, who can attain whenever he wishes the sciences from beginning to end in the order in which guessing correctly the middle term occurs, without a teacher and in very little time. This is because he has made excellent contact [Conjunction] with the Active Intellect so that he has absolutely no need of reflection and therefore *believes* that this knowledge is being poured into his heart from one place—and *perhaps* this is what the truth is.[99]

So, as it turns out, Avicenna's talk concerning one's "preparation" for illumination simply refers to the study that makes it much more likely that one will have such light-bulb moments.

The Active Intellect, which never changes, does not take notice of an individual human's request for intellection (like the other Intelligences, its knowledge is of universals not particulars), nor does it do anything other than think its thoughts. If there is an "action" involved in the Conjunction of the human rational soul with the Active Intellect, this action is unidirectional: the human soul initiates contact, turns toward the Active Intellect. But why must we do so? The short answer is: because there is no other place to turn.

For al-Farabi, as we saw above, the human intellect becomes an actual intellect by extracting an intelligible form from a physical entity; once it has done this it no longer has to repeat that operation, since it now need only to turn inward, intellecting itself, to contemplate that form: in repeating its intellection of such forms, the human intellect

> does not intellect a being outside of itself but rather it intellects its very own self. . . . This is different from the way in which these things themselves were intellected initially; for they were intellected initially due to being extracted from the matters in which they existed as potential intelligibles.[100]

Al-Farabi views human actual intellect as a memory bank, a sort of storehouse, containing intelligible forms. Avicenna, on the contrary, rejects any notion of intellectual memory—and so the rational soul cannot contemplate intelligibles by contemplating itself.[101] Yet there must be some locus for the existence of intelligible forms. Ruling out the possibility that this locus is the human intellect (which is not a storehouse), Avicenna locates intelligibles in the Active Intellect. When we wish to think universals, we must direct our intellect toward this locus.[102]

As we have seen, Avicenna's view on the human intellect differs greatly from al-Farabi's and from key elements of the general sketch of the Conjunction with the Active Intellect that we presented at the outset of this Introduction. If intelligible forms are "acquired," this is not in the manner of acquisitions that would belong to the human intellect's permanent collection; rather, acquisition is the name for what is taking place when

the rational soul thinks a universal thought. The human intellect does not become identical to the forms that it intellects[103]; it is always essentially the same as it was. The Conjunction with the Active Intellect is not in itself "Salvation," the entry into Paradise, the felicity of the afterlife: it is the human theoretical intellect's operating in a fully human manner. This Conjunction does not entail the ontological transformation of a human into a superhuman, of a mortal into an immortal (since all human souls are by nature immortal). Yet despite all this, Avicenna's view of the immortal soul's eternal bliss is (as we will see in *Dante and the Salvation of Intellect*) if anything even more intellectually elitist than is that of al-Farabi and the other major Arabic rationalist philosophers.

Averroes on the Conjunction

In our discussions of al-Farabi and Avicenna, we have seen two different versions of the Conjunction with the Active Intellect. For al-Farabi, when humans have made all or most of the potentially intelligible forms of natural entities become actual intelligible forms in our intellect, we are immediately able to intellect separate substances such as the Active Intellect, and thus we "conjoin" with it in the sense that we join its rank. This event is our salvation or ultimate felicity in heaven: our transformation from being mortal to being immortal; and it is the *only* way that a human can attain that ultimate felicity. Moreover, for al-Farabi, this state (acquired intellect) is permanent, atemporal, and irrevocable: the salvation of our intellect happens once and for all, regardless of what we may do or not do, know or not know, as individual humans who carry on living in the natural world. For Avicenna, we "conjoin" with the Active Intellect when, through exercising our own powers of thinking, we hit upon the truth and are illuminated in the sense that we are able to "contact," to see and reflect with our intellects, the intelligible forms and intelligible order of the cosmos located in the Active Intellect. For Avicenna, this conjoining is not a once and for all event but is discontinuous, temporal, and repeatable; moreover, it seems for the most part to involve the successive intellection of discrete truths rather than the simultaneous vision of the whole intelligible cosmic order. And for Avicenna, the conjunction plays no role whatsoever as a cause of the immortality of the human soul, since that soul is by its very nature immortal. It does, however, play an absolutely essential role for our ultimate felicity, since conjoining in this manner, repeatedly and with respect to the highest of metaphysical truths, is the *sine qua non* for our gaining a blissful afterlife.[104]

Averroes agrees with al-Farabi that the human soul is *not* by nature immortal; but for Averroes there is nothing—not even the Conjunction—that can alter that fact, since humans are mortal animals.[105] Agreeing with Avicenna that nothing can remain itself while also transforming

ontologically (i.e., altering in essence), Averroes also agrees with Avicenna that humans can, in this life on earth, make contact with intelligible truth; like Avicenna, he regards that contact as discontinuous, having a temporal beginning and end. And, again like Avicenna, Averroes insists there is no place in the human soul, no substrate, for the existence or preservation of intelligible forms; such forms are always external to us, even when we somehow make contact with them in our minds.

There is no need to discuss Averroes at length here, since we will engage closely with his thinking throughout our Long Commentary on Cavalcanti's *Donna me prega*. Our present purpose is to introduce aspects of Averroes's view of the Conjunction that are relevant for understanding those of Cavalcanti's love lyrics that we will treat in Part Four. For this purpose, a brief exposition of a key section of Averroes's Long Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* will suffice.[106]

Averroes does not teach that the human mind cannot be the site or the seat of potential theoretical intelligibles (i.e., the locus of things from which universal intelligible forms of material/natural entities can be abstracted and made actual). These things, as we will see presently, are what he calls "true images": products of the human rational faculty of imagination, forms that—although still enmattered and retaining at least traces of particularity—are sufficiently refined to allow the Possible Intellect to see in them, when they are illuminated by the Active Intellect, their universal intelligible forms. In this sense, Averroes does allow that we can have close contact or a connection with those intelligibles—close enough to guarantee the validity of our scientific thinking and our possession of workable knowledge of the physical world. But he distinguishes between theoretical intelligibles as eternal and unchanging, on the one hand, and theoretical intelligibles as generable and corruptible, passible (subject to alteration such as coming into and going out of existence), on the other. Humans can only ever enter into a kind of conjunction with this latter, passible kind of theoretical intelligible. Even if one were to allow, for the sake of argument, that we "have" or "possess" theoretical intelligibles (and not just true images) of this latter (passible) kind and that the human mind thus serves as the subject or substrate of such intelligibles (Averroes in fact denies that humans are such a subject or substrate), this would not confer on us the eternal life of separate substances, since the intelligibles that, under this scenario, we would "have in us" are generable and corruptible, not eternal. (Recall that the Salvation of Intellect in its optimist sense, as longed for by the true believers in the religion of the philosophers, depends on our intellecting—hence becoming identical with—an *eternal* separate substance.) Our contact or connection with (passible) intelligible forms is thus what I would like to call a quasi-conjunction: it allows for us to attain a high enough degree of knowing such that we can do science, but it does not transform us into a being of a more-than-animal ontological status.

Averroes asserts that "intelligibles in act must have two subjects [i.e., two substrates]."[107] He says this because he does not wish to stray from Aristotle's view that forming intelligible concepts (*formare per intellectum*) is thoroughly analogous to apprehending through sense perception (*comprehendere per sensum*).[108] Since "apprehending by sense is something which is actualized through two subjects," then the same must be said regarding forming intelligibles by means of intellect: there must be two subjects (i.e., substrates) involved. In the case of sense perception, the two subjects are: first, "the thing sensed outside the soul"; second, "the first actuality of the sense organ" ("first actuality" here just means that the sense organ is fully developed, in ready state, able to perform its operation of perception). For example, in the case of our visual perception of a tree the two subjects are the tree and our eye. The term "subject" here does not carry the modern sense of a subjective, active entity, and it makes no reference to consciousness, thinking, or feeling. With respect to the tree perceived by our eye, the tree (one of the two "subjects") is what we would nowadays call an "object."[109] The other of the two "subjects," the eye, is the substrate or receptacle, the thing or locus within which the perception (let us say, the visual imprint of the tree) exists or inheres. We can say that four things are involved in our visual perception of a tree: (1) the tree, one of the two "subjects"—the one that is the *object* of vision; (2) the perception or imprint existing in the eye (made true by the fact that there really is a tree out there at which we are looking; thus, the tree is "the subject in virtue of which the sense [perception] is true"); (3) the eye, the other of the two "subjects"—the one in which the sense perception (e.g., visual imprint) inheres ("the subject in virtue of which the sense perception is an existing form [i.e., is enmattered]"); (4) light, which makes the eye's potential perception of the tree actual perception.

Now, similarly, intellection of the universal intelligible form of a natural entity involves four things. First, there is a "subject" of the first kind (analogous to the tree), which is in fact what we would nowadays call an *object*; these are the "true images" (*ymagines vere*) produced by and residing in the imaginative power of the human soul. Second, there is a "subject" of the second kind (a substrate), the Possible Intellect (analogous to the eye), the thing in which or receptacle where the intelligible form (eternally) exists as pure intelligible form. Third, there is the universal intelligible form, apprehended by the (nonhuman, eternal, divine) Possible Intellect when it "looks" (so to speak) at the "true image"; this is analogous to the visual imprint of the tree existing in the eye. Fourth, there is the Active Intellect (analogous to light), which makes the potentially intelligible form in the "true image" actually intelligible to the Possible Intellect, hence making that intelligible form exist in—and exist *as*—the Possible Intellect.[110]

The human role—an indispensable role, a necessary condition for the order and functioning of the cosmos—is to produce this "subject"

(that is in fact an *object*), to make "imagined intentions [i.e., imagined forms]" (*intentiones ymaginate*)[111]—highly refined and nearly purely abstract images—*so that the Possible Intellect can know their universal intelligible forms*.[112] And, since the Possible Intellect is eternal, Averroes (giving nature credit for doing nothing in vain) asserts that there will always be at least one scientist living in the world.[113]

What might have led Averroes say such a thing (and several other related things that emerge from his intricate, fascinating analysis)? This question is much too large and much too interesting to pursue here. Let us simply say that, among his several motivations, lending support to Aristotle's aggressive crusade against the Platonic Forms is no doubt among the chief ones.[114]

For our purposes—the interpretations of several of Cavalcanti's love lyrics that we will offer in Part Four—there are three key points that Averroes teaches here. First, *human scientific knowing (the act of human theoretical intellection) is generable and corruptible—i.e., mortal*.[115] Often the death that haunts Cavalcanti's poems is not an individual's failure, for some reason or other (and usually according to Cavalcanti's interpreters that reason is some danger posed by love), to live up to the high standards of the *bios theoretikos*; rather, it is a simple fact of nature. Cavalcanti is not an epistemological skeptic: he does not deny that we can have some mode of science of theoretical intelligibles. The death in question involves the fact that those intelligibles, like human souls (including human "intellects"), cannot escape the fact that they will cease to exist. Second, *the human being is not ever the subject of intellection*; rather, a "true image" produced by the human imagination is the *object* of the Possible Intellect's intellection. Third, *human thinking is always imagination*.[116]

Averroes does assert that we conjoin with the Active Intellect: "When the Possible Intellect is united with us insofar as it is actualized through the Active Intellect, we are then united with the Active Intellect. This disposition is called acquisition and the acquired intellect."[117] On the face of it, this is nearly pure al-Farabi and could well have come from his *Letter on Intellect*. But, when Averroes fills in the details, we see that he is saying something quite different:

> The conjoining [*continuatio*] of intelligibles with us human beings is through the conjoining of the intelligible intention [i.e., form] with us (these are the imagined intentions [*intentiones ymaginate*]), namely, of the part which is related to it in us in some way as form. For this reason the statement that a boy is intelligent in potency can be understood in two ways, one because the imagined forms [*forme ymaginate*] which are in him are intelligible in potency, the second because the Possible Intellect which is naturally constituted to receive the intelligible [*intellectum*] of that imagined form is receptive in potency and conjoined [*continuatus*] with us in potency.[118]

Neither of the two potencies of which Averroes speaks here is a human potency—that is, neither means that the boy in question might possibly ever have intellection of the intelligible form. Averroes's speaking of the first of these potencies amounts to the recognition that the "imagined form" produced by the boy's soul has an intelligible core that can be intellected (although not by the boy—and indeed not by any human); his speaking of the second of these potencies is simply the assertion that the Possible Intellect can receive that intelligible core and thus can in some way conjoin with us. Thus, the Conjunction for Averroes is a *continuatio*, a relation of contiguity, an *interconnection*. The Possible Intellect can enter into a relation with something—the imagined form—that is related to us and, indeed, is in us. But this does not confer on us the power of intellect, nor does it mean that we ever come close to becoming a separate substance. In Cavalcanti's love poems, the scenes of frequent intercourse between the lover and Love are acted out in and around this juncture, this series of mediated connections. The Lady, for her part and for the most part, remains always on the far side of this junction.

Notes

1 Dominic J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.
2 Ibid.
3 Avicenna is an exception, since he argues that the human soul is by nature immortal; nonetheless, his conception of the afterlife, like that of the other *falasifa*, is extremely intellectualist: only those who attain intellection of metaphysical truths during their lifetimes (i.e., only extremely accomplished philosophers) will enjoy true bliss in the afterlife. Marc Geoffroy (Averroes, *L'Islam et la raison*, trans. Marc Geoffroy [Paris: Flammarion, 2000], 148) sums up the philosophers' generally skeptical attitude toward the possibility of personal immortality:

> By all appearances, all parts of the human soul that determine an individual human being in his or her individuality are corporeal forms, which cease to exist with [the death of] the body. Of the human being, it is the intellect alone that might possibly be eternal. But the intellect is universal and, unlike the other faculties of the soul, does not properly belong to the individual.

See also Ovey N. Mohammed, *Averroes' Doctrine of Immortality* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1984).
4 For an excellent concise summary of the question of human knowing and its relation to the Active Intellect in Islamic philosophy, see Olga Lizzini, "Human Knowledge and Separate Intellect," in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Richard C. Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat (New York: Routledge, 2016), 285–300.
5 Juan Fernando Sellés, ed., *El intelecto agente en la escolástica renacentista* (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2006), 9. For a comprehensive survey of theories of intellect in the classical Arabic rationalist tradition, see Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

6 Juan Fernando Sellés, *El intelecto agente y los filósofos* (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2012), 28–29.
7 Aristotle, *De anima* 429a15; 429a10; 430a10; 430a13–15. All translations of Aristotle, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
8 *DA* 430a16–17.
9 *DA* 430a17–19.
10 *DA* 430a22–26.
11 *Generation of Animals* 736b27–28; trans. slightly modified.
12 *Metaphysics* 1072b20–31.
13 For a thorough enumeration of those Latin scholastics who regarded the Active Intellect as a name for God, see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima' in the Latin West* (London: The Warburg Institute and Nino Aragno Editore, 2000), 203–223.
14 Hasse (*Avicenna's 'De anima'*, 187–189) argues that the famous notion of the Active Intellect as "giver of forms"—a term attributed to but not explicitly used by Avicenna—was meant by Avicenna in an ontological, not an epistemological sense: the essential forms of natural beings emanate from the Active Intellect and are enmattered in the sublunary world; the intelligible forms of those beings, however, are abstracted by the human intellect, not directly given to the human intellect by the Active Intellect.
15 *DA* 403a8–10.
16 See Richard C. Taylor, "The Epistemology of Abstraction," in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Richard C. Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat (New York: Routledge, 2016), 273–284.
17 *DA* 430a3–5: "For in the case of objects which involve no matter, what thinks and what is thought are identical; for speculative knowledge and its object are identical." *Metaphysics* 1072b20:

> And thought [*nous*] thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same.

18 *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177b26–1178a8. *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 225–226; trans. slightly modified.
19 Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* 3.27, ed. Shlomo Pines, Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 511.
20 Averroes, *The Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect*, ed. Kalman P. Bland (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1982), 111.
21 Averroes, *Averroes on Plato's 'Republic'*, trans. Ralph Lerner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 83.
22 As Marc Geoffroy remarks, according to the Arabic rationalists, there is simply no substitute for theoretical intellection; no amount of virtuous works, piety, purity of intention, or spiritual exercise can elevate a human being to the perfection of eternal bliss in the afterlife or to a status above that of mortal:

> For the *falasifa*, human perfection requires . . . the complete actualization of the rational faculty through the attainment of total knowledge of the universe, corresponding to the completion of the curriculum of theoretical sciences. An intellectually imperfect man will never transcend his

> status as a corruptible being . . . [However,] perfected knowledge makes it possible for the individual to transcend his condition by becoming essentially identical with the separate Intelligences, this identification being nothing other than man's ultimate happiness. . . . Averroes . . . insists on the secondary and subordinate role of religiousity (conceived of as practical virtue) in the attainment of the ultimate goal, which is necessarily intellectual.
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> Marc Geoffroy, "Averroès sur l'intellect comme cause agente et cause formelle, et la question de la 'jonction'—I," in *Averroès et les Averroïsmes juif et latin*, ed. J.-B Brenet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 77–78

23 See my *Dante's Pluralism and the Islamic Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 152–160; Marvin Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

24 Dante, *Monarchy* 1.2.5, ed. and trans. Prue Shaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5; trans. modified:

> For it must be noted that there are certain things (such as mathematics, physics [i.e., natural science], and divinity [i.e., metaphysics]) which are outside human control and about which we can only theorize, but which we cannot affect by our actions.

For the claim that Dante's three guides at the end of *Purgatory* are in part meant to represent the three theoretical sciences mentioned here by Dante (Mathelda = mathematics, Statius = physics, Beatrice = metaphysics), see my "Dante's *Commedia*, Islamic Rationalism, and the Enumeration of the Sciences," *Doctor Virtualis* 12 (2013): 135–167.

25 Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 10.2, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 366; Maimonides, *The Essay on Resurrection*, in *Epistles of Maimonides*, trans. Abraham Halkin (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985), 211.

26 Shlomo Pines, "Introduction" to Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), lxxx. Each of the three most important Islamic rationalists from al-Andalus—Ibn Bajja, Ibn Tufayl, and Averroes—mentions al-Farabi's skeptical remark, which is otherwise unattested; for a discussion and bibliography, see Robinson, *Samuel ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 95–99.

27 Averroes, *The Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction*, 108. See also my *Dante's Pluralism*, 47–50.

28 On Dante's status as represented in the closing verses of *Comedy*, see my "Dante as Celestial Soul," 99–109.

29 "Fiducia philosophantis est non coniungi tantum agenti ut efficienti, sed etiam sicut formae"; Albertus Magnus, *De anima* 3.3.11, cited in Alain de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique: Albert le Grand* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2005), 302; emphasis added.

30 De Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 302.

31 In a series of important works, Antonio Gagliardi (see Works Cited) has amply demonstrated that the Averroist notion of the philosopher's ultimate felicity as "Conjunction with the Intellect" posed a challenge to the tenets of Christianity and was a perspective that had to be reckoned with, pro or con, by intellectuals and literary artists of Dante's time, including especially Cavalcanti.

32 Al-Farabi flourished a few generations after the ninth-century AD Iraqi aristocrat al-Kindi (c. AD 800–873), who is generally regarded as the

first Islamic philosopher. Al-Farabi's categorization of various senses of "intellect" owes some debt to, while revising and greatly expanding on, al-Kindi's brief work *On the Intellect*; see *The Philosophical Works of al-Kindi*, ed. Peter Adamson and Peter E. Pormann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 93–98. As Lizzini ("Human Knowledge," 291) remarks, al-Kindi's text was "translated into Latin twice [in the 12th century] . . . [and] had a certain success in the European Latin world."

33 See Lawrence V. Berman, "Maimonides the Disciple of Alfarabi," *Israel Oriental Studies* 4 (1974), 154–178.

34 See James T. Robinson, "Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes in Hebrew: Remarks on the Indirect Transmission of Arabic-Islamic Philosophy in Medieval Judaism," in *The Judeo-Christian-Islamic Heritage: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. Richard C. Taylor and Irfan A. Omar (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2012), 59–87.

35 De Libera (*Métaphysique et noétique*, 308–309)—with his usual magisterial command of his material—shows that Albert's philosophy is fundamentally determined by al-Farabi, although Albert's al-Farabi is secondhand, mediated through Averroes. In turn, Albert was himself a major conduit through which the Latin West received an "Arabized/Farabized" Aristotle: as de Libera quips, "L'Aristote d'Albert est un Aristote (f)arabisé" ("Albert's Aristotle is an Aristotle who has been Arabized/al-Farabized").

36 On the extent of this influence, see Dyala Hamzah's Introduction to her French translation of the *Letter*, in Al-Farabi, *L'Épître sur l'intellect*, trans. Dyala Hamzah (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 26–27. As Francesca Lucchetta says in the Introduction to her Italian edition of the *Letter*:

> The most salient characteristic of the Farabian-Avicennan theory—namely, the notion of an Agent [i.e., Active] Intellect separate [from matter] and unique [i.e., one and the same] for all of humankind, exercising an illuminating role with respect to the human potential intellect—was disseminated, interpreted, refuted, or accepted with certain modifications, and at any rate discussed by the sharpest medieval [Christian] thinkers.
>
> al-Farabi, *Epistola sull'intelletto*, trans. Francesca Lucchetta (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1974), 17

37 Al-Farabi, "On the Intellect" [*Letter on Intellect*], in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. and trans. Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), 70–71, 78.

38 Ibid., 71. I have sometimes slightly modified the English translation upon consulting Philippe Vallat's French edition of the *Letter* (cited below).

39 Ibid.

40 *Letter on Intellect*, 71–72.

41 Lucchetta (Farabi, *Epistola*, 9) accurately describes al-Farabi's conception of the human intellect as the lowest in a hierarchy of Intelligences (God being the highest, the Active Intellect being the next-to-lowest), it being unique in that only the human intellect is not always entirely actual: the *Letter*

> presents the human intellect as that particular [I]ntelligence that, created in a state of potentiality, struggles to gain, through an evolutionary process, its status as fully actual and as completely separated from matter—that is, that can become, following the completion of an arduous course on earth, self-sufficient, perfect, only then retiring to a life of splendid intellection, losing its functions as the 'soul' of a body and proving itself to be pure *nous* [i.e., intellect].

42 *Letter on Intellect*, 72.
43 Ibid., 74: "These forms that have never been in matter [i.e., separate substances] can be intellected [by us] completely only after all or most of the intelligibles of natural beings have become actual intelligibles." As Phillipe Vallat (in Al-Farabi, *Le livre du régime politique* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012], 7n19) remarks, "for the actual intellect, the intellection of forms abstracted from material entities amounts to a prerequisite or a springboard to advance to the intellection of separate realities [i.e., separate substances]."
44 See Philippe Vallat's gloss (in Al-Farabi, *Épître sur l'intellect* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012], 28n78): "In sum, the *telos* of material forms is to be abstracted and thought by man and thus to gain entry to a superior degree of being that is no less a 'world' than the physical world.'"
45 *Letter on Intellect*, 73; emphasis added.
46 See Lucchetta (Farabi), *Epistola*, 37–39.
47 See Vallat, *Épître*, 29n81.
48 *Letter on Intellect*, 76; emphases added.
49 See *Letter on Intellect*, 73–74.
50 See Vallat, *Épître*, 37–38n104.
51 Ibid., 51n144.
52 *Letter on Intellect*, 74.
53 Ibid., 74–75.
54 Taylor, "The Epistemology," 275–276:

> According to [al-Farabi's] account of abstraction, abstract intelligibles are not emanated into the human soul directly from the [Active Intellect] but rather are derived by individual thinkers from their experience of things of the world. . . . Human beings must individually strive by their own personal efforts at education and scientific learning, employing [a] power emanated from the [Active Intellect] together with the powers of sensation and image-formation, to come to be intelligent knowers of the intelligible content of the natural world.

55 See Taylor, "The Epistemology," 277.
56 *Letter on Intellect*, 70. On first principles according to al-Farabi, see Philippe Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2004), 162, 209–237.
57 Al-Farabi, *The Political Regime* [*The Principles of Existing* Things], in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. and trans. Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 82; trans. slightly modified, upon consultation of Vallat's French edition, cited above.
58 See Vallat (Farabi), *Le livre du régime politique*, 8n22.
59 *The Political Regime*, 83–84, emphases added.
60 Ibid., 84; emphasis added.
61 Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 25:

> Consistently and boldly al-Farabi declares that those human beings in whom this potential intellect does not become actual perish with the death of the body. . . . Al-Farabi . . . [has] no doctrine of the torture after death but only that of the bliss.

Vallat (Farabi), *Épître*, 191–192:

> The Active Intellect moves them [i.e., philosophers on their way toward becoming acquired intellect] toward their supernatural perfection, which is to say that it makes them, who up to this point were corruptible

> [i.e., mortal], perpetual or sempiternal [i.e., immortal]. It is in keeping with al-Farabi's subtlety that he reaffirms in this oblique manner that the human's being, that is to say the human soul, is impermanent and only becomes permanent and subsistent upon meeting certain conditions [i.e., upon becoming acquired intellect].

Philippe Vallat, "Principles of the Philosophy of State," *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Richard C. Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat (New York: Routledge, 2016), 338–339:

> Not achieving the purpose for the sake of which we human beings came to be [i.e., attaining intellection of separate substances] inevitably results in the withering of our soul as our body dies. Al-Farabi does not believe human souls are immortal *per se* in virtue of their initial natures. Rather, he thinks they can become immortal given specific conditions . . . . [T]ruth makes human beings what they are beckoned to become and . . . makes them felicitous, blessed. It is truth, then, that makes happiness possible. And happiness is synonymous with immortality. Consequently, there can be no immortality without a true philosophy.

62 Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 57:

> On the more plausible reading, then, Alfarabi accepted immortality only of the human [potential] intellect . . . after it has become an acquired intellect, with no differentiation between individual immortal acquired intellects. His statements on the immortality of differentiated human souls, whether virtuous or vicious, would on that reading be a stratagem designed to veil his precise views from conservative religious readers.

Vallat (Farabi), *Epitre*, 135: "Al-Farabi is, as he himself tells us in the 'Summary' of *The Perfect State*, very capable of not always saying exactly what he thinks."

63 One should note however that Philippe Vallat, one of the leading currently active al-Farabi scholars, takes seriously al-Farabi's assertions that all citizens of the virtuous city will be rewarded with a blissful afterlife. Vallat argues that the images, symbols, and analogies provided to non-philosophers by an authentically philosophical religion allow non-philosophers a grasp of universal truth that is sufficient for their salvation. See Vallat, "Principles of the Philosophy of State" and *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, chap. 9.

64 Al-Farabi, *The Philosophy of Aristotle*. Trans. Muhsin Mahdi, *Alfarabi: Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 127.

65 Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna's Philosophical Project," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 32.

66 On the translation of Avicenna in medieval Europe, which was centered in Toledo and began around AD 1150, see Amos Bertolacci, "The Reception of Avicenna in Latin Medieval Culture," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 242–269.

67 Avicenna, *The Salvation* 2.6.4; trans. Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology: An English Translation of* Kitāb al-Najāt*, Book II, Chapter VI* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 32–33.

68 *The Psychology of The Healing* 5.1:

> Thus the first faculty of the human soul is a faculty related to *theoria* and is called the theoretical intellect [*intellectus contemplativus*], and it

> judges between true and false concerning universals [*veri et falsi de universalibus*]; and the second is a faculty related to *praxis* [*virtus activa*] and it judges between the good and the bad concerning particular things [*bono et malo in particularibus*]. And the former is for determining what is necessary, impossible, or possible, while the latter is for determining what is shameful, fine, or permissible. The premises of the former come from the first principles [e.g., the whole is greater than the part], while the premises of the latter come from what is probable, received opinion [*ex auctoritatibus*], and things said to be the case [*famosis*].

Avicenna Latinus, *Liber De Anima seu Sextus De Naturalibus IV-V* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 78–79. Note that the Latin refrains from calling the practical faculty *intellectus*.

69 On Avicenna's distinction between the practical and theoretical faculties, see Olga Lizzini, "Vie active, vie contemplative et philosophie chez Avicenne," in *Vie active et vie contemplative au Moyen Âge et au seuil de la Renaissance*, ed. Christian Trottmann (Rome: École française de Rome, 2009), 207–239.

70 Avicenna, *On the Rational Soul*, in Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 2nd edition (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 70.

71 See Avicenna, *Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 9.7; 350.

72 Meryem Sebti, *Avicenne: l'âme humaine* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 2000), 25, 30–31:

> The body is created because a soul only attains its actual perfection by operations that it accomplishes through [use of the body]. . . . If the soul had [in an existence prior to the creation of the body] seen the intelligible world, it would be perfect. However, it is precisely because the soul is not perfect that it enters the world equipped with a body that will help it acquire the intelligible forms in order to become, once it has left behind this carnal casing, an intellectual world in which the intelligible world is reflected.

73 *Liber De Anima*, 105.

74 Avicenna, who is less interested in classifying the division of labor in the *polis* than was al-Farabi and than Dante will be in *Comedy*, is primarily interested in using the doctrine of a diversity of human essences (perfections) as the basis for his classification of the human genus into two species: one with the potential to make contact with the Active Intellect and one without that potential. As Jean R. Michot says, Avicenna

> makes a fundamental distinction between two human essences [*humanités*] and two [human] destinies. . . . The chasm that separates [human] intelligence from [human] lack of awareness seems to him so profound that he comes to consider the unaware [*les inconscients*] as a different [species of] humanity. In his view, humans do not so much share a common essence (even if only to varying degrees) but rather are divided into an intellectual elite and an unaware religious mass—each of these two [groups] constituting a distinct [species of] humanity.
>
> La destinée de l'homme selon Avicenne: le retour à Dieu et l'imagination (Louvain, Peeters, 1986), 50

75 *The Salvation*, 33–35.

76 Ibid., 34:

> In this stage it is called 'material intellect,' a faculty that is present in every individual of the human species. It is called 'material' in view of

its resemblance to primary matter, which in itself does not possess any of the forms but is the substratum of all forms.

77 Ibid. (trans slightly modified):

> By 'first principles' I mean the basic premises to which assent is given, not through any process of learning, nor even with any consciousness on the part of the subject giving assent . . . , just as we necessarily believe that the whole is greater than the part, and that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another. So long as only this amount of actualization has been achieved, it is called *intellectus in habitu*.

78 Ibid., 35:

> [The intellect] has, as it were, conserved [intelligible forms], so that it can actually contemplate those forms when it wills and knows that it can do so. It is called *intellectus in actu*, because it is an intellect which thinks whenever it wills without needing any further process of acquisition.

79 See Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna: Metaphysics of the Rational Soul," *The Muslim World* 102 (2012), 419.

80 *Liber De Anima*, 134 and 137:

> What is said about the soul becoming itself the intelligibles is in my view impossible. For I cannot understand their saying that one thing becomes another thing, and I cannot conceive how this could be the case. If this means that a thing discards one form and takes on another, and that with the first form it is one thing and with another form it is another thing, then, in truth, the first thing has not become the second thing; rather, the first thing has been annihilated, and all that remains is its substrate [*subiectum*] or a part of itself. . . . If the soul [becomes] itself the intelligible form, then it has become something other than itself—but this is not at all the case.

81 Étienne Gilson, "Les sources gréco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 4 (1929–1930), 100.

82 Ibid., 107.

83 Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Avicenna's Epistemological Optimism," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 109:

> Modern interpreters of Avicenna's epistemology and psychology are divided about his theory of intellectual knowledge. Those who emphasize the Neoplatonic character of Avicenna's position say that all intellectual knowledge comes from the emanation of the [A]ctive [I]ntellect, which is the lowest of the celestial intelligences. Those who emphasize the Aristotelian character of Avicenna's philosophy argue that for Avicenna, intellectual knowledge depends upon the human capacities of abstracting, thinking, and intuition. An example of the first tradition is Fazlur Rahman's reading of Avicenna. He argued in 1958 that Avicenna's language of abstraction is only a metaphor for emanation [i.e., illumination from above]. Since the intelligible forms emanate directly from the [A]ctive [I]ntellect and since human thinking only has the limited function to dispose the soul for the reception of emanation, the abstraction of the form 'for Avicenna is only a *façon de parler*.' Other scholars have also proposed that Avicenna should not be taken literally on abstraction. The opposing interpretative tradition emphasizes the human intellect's

> capacity to know intelligibles at will. Dimitri Gutas has argued that Avicenna's term 'emanation' and the phrase 'to come into contact [i.e., Conjunction] with' the Active Intellect are nothing but metaphors for the syllogistic, cognitive process, which leads to new knowledge.

84 *The Salvation*, 33.

85 Translation from Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Avicenna on Abstraction," in *Aspects of Avicenna*, ed. Robert Wisnovsky (Princeton: Markus Weiner, 2001), 60–61. *Pointers and Reminders*, described by Gutas (*Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 157, 155) as "the culmination of Avicenna's philosophical career" and Avicenna's "last philosophical summa," is available in A.-M. Goichon's French translation (*Livre des directives et remarques* [Paris: J. Vrin, 1951, 1999]). Hasse's article shows the continuity between this late work and one of Avicenna's earliest, the *Compendium on the Soul*: if in the earlier work "with respect to intellectual abstraction, the human rational faculty appears as fully capable of performing the act of abstraction by itself" (51), so in Avicenna's mature philosophy "there is no indication that Avicenna conceives of the soul's power of abstraction as something limited. . . . The protagonist in abstraction remains the human intellect" (63, 57).

86 Translation from Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 5.

87 "Guessing correctly" is the phrase that Gutas settles on to translate the Arabic *ḥads*, which in previous works he had rendered as "intuition"; he does so because "intuition" may "tend to mislead or create a misunderstanding of this crucial concept as something mystical"; Gutas, "Avicenna's philosophical project," 36.

88 Translation from Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 183.

89 This passage is from the Logic of *The Healing*; trans. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 184.

90 My presentation of this syllogism is drawn from Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*, 181.

91 Gutas, "Avicenna's Philosophical Project," 41–42:

> In section after section and chapter after chapter in numerous works [Avicenna] analyzes not only questions of formal logic, but also the very conditions operative in the process of hitting upon the middle term: how one can work for it and where to look for it, and what the apparatus and operations of the soul are that bring it about. . . . When at the end of all these operations . . . the intellect hits upon a middle term or just perceives an intelligible that it had not been thinking about before, it acquires the intelligible in question (hence the appellation of this stage of intellection, "acquired intellect"), or, otherwise expressed, receives it from the [A]ctive [I]ntellect which thinks it eternally and atemporally since the [A]ctive [I]ntellect is, in effect, the locus of all intelligibles, there being no other place for them to be always in actual existence. Avicenna calls this process of acquisition or reception a 'contact' [Conjunction] between the human and [A]ctive intellects.

92 Dimitri Gutas, "Intuition and Thinking: The Evolving Structure of Avicenna's Epistemology," in *Aspects of Avicenna*, ed. Robert Wisnovsky (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 27.

93 Ibid., 30, 38.

94 Gutas, "Avicenna's Philosophical Project," 41.

95 Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing* 5.6:

> These intelligible forms are entities that subsist in themselves. . . . The [human] intellect sometimes looks in their direction and sometimes

> turns away from them. When [the human intellect] looks in their direction, they are manifested in it, and when it turns away from them they are not. The soul is thus like a mirror, and [the intelligible forms] are like external things which are sometimes reflected in it and sometimes not. . . . The [Active Intellect] pours on to the soul one form after another in accordance with the request of the soul; and when the soul turns away from [the Active Intellect], the flux ceases.
>
> Quoted in Meryem Sebti, "Réceptivité et spéculation dans la noétique d'avicenne," in *Miroir et savoir: La transmission d'un thème platonicien, des Alexandrins à la philosophie arabo-musulmane*, ed. Daniel De Smet, Meryem Sebti, and Godefroid De Gallatäy (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 2008), 158

96 Sebti ("Réceptivité et speculation," 152) shows that Avicenna's likening the human intellect to a mirror on which light shines only when the mirror is facing the source of light is meant to express the fact that intelligibles are never truly possessed by or contained *within* that intellect:

> The intelligible form is only in the human intellect when it is actually being intellected. The human intellect does not possess the intelligible form as its own object; it *reflects* it. It turns toward the [A]ctive [I]ntellect so that the forms that [the Active Intellect] contains may be reflected in it.

97 Gutas, "Avicenna: Metaphysics of the Rational Soul," 412.

98 Gutas ("Intuition and Thinking," 21) likens hitting upon the middle term to one's experience of something suddenly occurring "out of the blue":

> This experience of having something occur to him 'out of the blue' may also be at the basis of [Avicenna's] theory of the Active Intellect as the locus or 'storage area' of all the intelligibles. . . . The experience is indeed startling: one has a problem; after hours of work he gives up and moves on to something else; some time later, when he may have forgotten about the problem, the answer just occurs to him. Where did the answer come from? This is more difficult to account for than any other kind of conceptualization like axiomatic truths [i.e., first principles] (they are so obvious that the question of their provenance is not immediately problematic) or abstraction (one starts from a concrete specimen and then can almost hear himself think through to the abstract concept). The answer obviously came out of the blue, and Avicenna had no difficulty identifying the 'blue' with the Active Intellect.

99 *Philosophy for 'Alā-ad-Dawla*, trans. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 185; emphases added.

100 *Letter on Intellect*, 73.

101 On Avicenna's rejection of the existence of intellectual memory, see Sebti, *Avicenne: l'âme humaine*, 95.

102 See Hasse, "Avicenna's Epistemological Optimism," 116–117.

103 See Sebti, *Avicenne: l'âme humaine*, 97–98.

104 See Michot, *La destinée de l'homme selon Avicenne*.

105 As Taylor says regarding the human being's conjoining with the Possible and Active Intellects, for Averroes

> as is the case for al-Farabi and Ibn Sina [Avicenna], this attainment of knowledge as the apprehension of intelligibles in act constitutes

> human fulfillment and happiness, yet unlike those two thinkers Ibn Rushd [Averroes] has no philosophical doctrine of post mortem human existence.
>
> "The Epistemology of Abstraction," 282

Note that Taylor chooses his words carefully: Averroes has no *philosophical* doctrine of human immortality; in those of his writings meant for non-philosophers, however, he does (as do al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Maimonides) use language that will encourage humans to believe in traditional religious doctrines. We will see that in *Comedy* Dante fully exploits this distinction between what is true and what should be taught to ordinary people.

106 Averroes's view concerning the Active and Possible Intellects and their relation to human "intellect" and the human soul evolved through various works over time. In *LC* he presents his mature, fully considered view, although not without remarking that this is his current yet perhaps not definitive opinion on these tremendously difficult questions. For an excellent account of the evolution of Averroes's views, see Taylor's Introduction to *LC*.

107 *LC*, 316. All quotations of Averroes in the following discussion, until noted otherwise, are from *LC*, 316.

108 "Conceptualizing [*formare per intellectum*], as Aristotle says, is just as apprehending by sense [*comprehendere per sensum*]"; Ibid.

109 Jean Baptiste Brenet ("Averroès a-t-il inventé une théorie des deux sujets de la pensée," *Tópicos* 27 [2004]: 65):

> Despite the use of the term 'subject,' . . . it turns out that the thesis of two 'subjects' of *sensata* [sense perceptions] (or, in keeping with the analogy, of *intellecta in actu* [i.e. actual intellections]) is in fact a thesis positing that there is a double fundament, one subjective and the other *objective*, of sensation (or, of intellection)—in other words, a thesis positing sensation's [or, intellection's] substrate and its *object*. . . . Jean de Jandun (d. 1328), the 'Prince of the Averroists,' already remarked that in the passage concerning the two 'subjects,' *subiectum* should be understood sometimes 'as the substrate [*pro fundamento*] in which something is contained and inheres [*inest et inhaeret*],' sometimes 'as the object [*pro obiecto*]'.

110 As Brenet ("Averroès," 57n15), suggesting an answer to the question concerning what the Active Intellect "does," remarks:

> Instead of writing that the [Active I]ntellect 'extracts' or 'abstracts' the universal intelligible form from the imagined form when it 'contemplates' the image . . . , he could well have said that in fact it is the universal intelligible form itself that 'shows up' or 'appears' when it is submitted for the inspection of the [Possible I]ntellect.

That is, in the light of the Active Intellect the Possible Intellect can see the intelligible forms that are there in the images produced by human thinking. And thus Averroes can regard human thinking (imagination) as a mode of "theoretical intellect," although humans do not have intellection and although "theoretical intellect" in this sense is mortal not eternal.

111 *LC*, 317.

112 Speaking of the powers of the human soul (the sensible, imaginative, cogitative, and memorative), Averroes says (*LC*, 334) that "they all cooperate to present an image of the sensible thing, so that the separate rational power [i.e., the Possible/Active Intellect] may behold it and extract the universal intention and after that receive it, that is, apprehend it."

113 See *LC*, 324n93.

114 As Brenet ("Averroès," 57) explains, theoretical intelligibles can be generable and corruptible, "even though the [I]ntellects able to produce them [i.e., the Active and the Possible Intellect] are eternal," due to the fact that

> their existence depends necessarily on [true] individual images (the *forme que sunt ymagines vere*) which themselves are generable and corruptible, appear and disappear. Universal forms do not have that mode of being that Plato thought he could attribute to his Ideas: they do not stand always already apart from the world and from things, but rather in order to be thought and received intellectually they need to be drawn out of things, abstracted from them. This takes place on the basis of images that humans think, such that the [I]ntellect is able to bring out in them a core of intelligibility. Thus theoretical intelligibles (*intellecta speculativa*) are generable because images come and go and because humans do not think without images.

115 As Taylor (*LC*, lxxxvi) says, "Theoretical intelligibles for Averroes have two subjects. . . . They are in the individual human theoretical intellect, where they are perishable, as is their subject, and they are in the [P]ossible [I]ntellect, where they are eternal and imperishable."

116 "[Averroes's] doctrine of the double subject is essentially an elaboration on the Aristotelian claim that the activities of the intellect are always dependent upon the concomitant activities of the imagination"; Deborah L. Black, "Consciousness and Self-Knowledge in Aquinas's Critique of Averroes' Psychology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993), 363. One might suggest reading Black's formulation thus: the activities of the Possible Intellect are always dependent upon the concomitant activities of the human imagination.

117 *LC*, 328.

118 *LC*, 320.

Part Four

Who Could Think Beyond Nature? Allegories of Intellection

One of Cavalcanti's earliest poems, *Fresca rosa novella*, which is traditionally placed first in his *Canzoniere*, appears at first sight a breezy ballad, in the lighter troubadour style, celebrating the coming of spring and exhorting the natural world to join the poet in praising the lady whom he desires. With one very notable exception,[1] Cavalcanti scholars generally do not suspect much going on in this ballad other than an effort to compose rhymes in the mode of the Sicilian and Siculo-Tuscan schools.[2] The opening verses present a delightful scene that is worlds away from the schools of the philosophers:

Fresca rosa novella,
piacente Primavera,
per prata e per rivera
gaiamente cantando,
vostro fin pregio mando — a la verdura.

(I, 1–5)

Fresh new rose,
Pleasant Spring [*Primavera*],
By meadows and by field
Gaily singing
I commend your fine excellence — to the greenery.)[3]

But even this pleasant song turns philosophical, and in doing so already exemplifies what will become Guido's stock-in-trade: the use of the language of love lyric as a vehicle for philosophy, and, particularly, for epistemology:

Tutto lo mondo canti,
po' che lo tempo vène,
sì come si convene,
vostr'altezza pregiata:
ché siete angelicata — criatura.

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Angelica sembianza
in voi, donna, riposa:
Dio, quanto aventurosa
fue la mia disïanza!
Vostra cera gioiosa,
poi che passa e avanza
natura e costumanza,
ben è mirabil cosa.
Fra lor le donne dea
vi chiaman, come sète;
tanto adorna parete,
ch'eo non saccio contare;
e chi poria pensare — oltra natura?

Oltra natura umana
vostra fina piagenza
fece Dio, per essenza
che voi foste sovrana:
per che vostra parvenza
ver' me non sia lontana:
or non mi sia villana
la dolce provedenza!
E, se vi pare oltraggio
ch'ad amarvi sia dato,
non sia da voi blasmato:
ché solo Amor mi sforza,
contra cui non val forza — né misura.

(I, 14–44)

(Let the whole world sing,
Since the season approaches,
Just as is proper,
Your excellent highness,
For you are an angelic — creature.

An angelic semblance
Dwells, lady, in you:
God, how fortunate
Was my desiring!
Your joyful countenance,
In that it passes and goes beyond
Nature and custom,
Is surely a wondrous thing.
Among themselves the ladies call you

Goddess, and so you are;
You appear so embellished
That I know not how to describe it:
And who could think — beyond nature?

Beyond human nature
Did God create your fine loveliness
So that you would be
Supreme by your essence:
So that your appearance
Not be distant from me,
Let not sweet Providence now
Be uncourteous to me!
And if to you it seems excess
That I give myself to loving you
May I not be blamed by you:
For Love alone compels me,
Against whom no force avails — nor measure.

In the poetry of the Occitan troubadours, the lady whose praises are sung and whose favor is desired is normally a flesh-and-blood, fully human woman. This does not preclude her from being, in the poet's eyes, absolutely extraordinary, the unique paragon of all beauty, courtesy, and worth—but the fact remains that she is a real woman. And what the troubadour usually ultimately desires from her—although the attainment of this desire is endlessly deferred—is what was sometimes called *lo fach*, "the (sexual) deed." But, with perhaps a few exceptions, one will search in vain for any trace of eroticism in Cavalcanti's poetry.[4] Guido shows little interest in real women in the world outside of his mind, and the Lady that does interest him is not a woman but is in effect a figure for the Real. Moreover, he frequently turns the focus inward to his interior self and to the drama of death and disintegration unfolding there. This absence of sexual desire is not a matter of morality or a profession of chastity; rather, it reflects the fact that, for Guido, the Lady is not a lady. Here in *Fresca rosa novella* the Lady is a creature of nonhuman, and beyond-human, essence: *ché siete angelicata criatura* ("for you are an angelic creature"; line 18). This is not rhetorical flattery, nor is it a simile: Guido is not saying that his Lady is *like* an angel; he is saying that she *is*, literally, a creature of an ontological status *oltra natura umana* ("beyond human nature"; line 32) and equivalent to that of an angel—i.e., an Intelligence or a celestial soul.[5] The distance between Guido and the Lady is the function of an *essential* difference between them: she is sovereign or supreme *per essenza* (line 34); her *quidditas* is other than, and superior to, the human essence. This ballad uses the courtly commonplace positing a distance between lover and lady (Jaufre

Rudel's famous *amor de lonh*, "distant love"; compare Guido's *lontana* in line 37), turning it into a distance between two essentially different creatures—a distance that in Guido's mature poems will become, more explicitly, a hard and fast boundary between the human and the angelic (i.e., metaphysical).

In this early poem Cavalcanti seems to harbor some hope that the gap might be bridged. His hopes do not lie in a change of heart on the part of a lady but rather in a change in the order of the Cosmos; thus, with a significant variation of a courtly *topos*, he does not beg for courtesy or generosity from his lady but rather from Providence, from the very ordering principle of reality itself (lines 36–39).[6] To traverse the distance between himself and his lady, Guido is dependent on what we can call a miracle, an exception to the rules of nature. But as a Radical Aristotelian, Cavalcanti recognizes that miracles do not happen and that human thinking cannot go beyond its measure (here we should note that *misura*, "measure" or "limit", is the ballad's last word [line 44]). It turns out that this early and supposedly non-philosophical poem contains the single phrase that perhaps sums up the gist of Guido's philosophy better than any other: *chi poria pensare oltra natura?* ("who could think beyond nature?"). The human mind, while perhaps well enough equipped to think objects in the natural, sublunary realm, cannot think those things not subject to generation and corruption: it cannot intellect separate substances, Intelligences. The troubadour key word *mezura* (which has a broad range of meanings but essentially signifies the self-control and overall moral refinement on which the courtly lover's ethical value is based) is transformed by Cavalcanti into *misura* as the *limit* of human cognition. Love is a kind of *oltraggio* (line 40; "excess," "insult"), an outrage or insult to the Cosmos insofar as it is a human's striving to go *oltra natura umana*—or what Cavalcanti will call in *Donna me prega* (line 44) *oltra misura di natura* ("beyond the measure/limit of nature"). Love is the human compulsion to go beyond the measure of our natural limits, to gain entry to the metaphysical realm where there is in fact no measure because there are no bodies and no finite movements, no time or space. The Lady's status as a metaphysical object—a separate substance (i.e., an Intelligence), with no element of that materiality which is the necessary starting point for human science—is indicated by the fact that she is said to transcend "nature and custom" (*natura e costumanza*; line 25). With this phrase Guido names two of the three main divisions of medieval philosophy, physics/*physis* (*natura*) and ethics/*ethos* (*costumanza*), and he pointedly does *not* mention the third division, metaphysics—for that is precisely the domain of the Lady from which Guido is exiled.[7] For Cavalcanti, humans can attain a science of physics and a practical knowledge of ethics but not a science of metaphysics.

Here we are led to etymologize the name *Primavera* ("Spring")—she whom Guido names in line 2—in the manner of Dante in *Vita nuova*.

In that book, Dante interprets the name of Guido's lady to mean *prima verrà*, "she will come first"; on that basis he constructs an analogy: just as John the Baptist comes first, announcing and adumbrating the *verace luce* ("true light") that is Christ, so will Cavalcanti's lady chronologically precede and pave the way for Dante's Beatrice—with the implication that Cavalcanti's poetic achievements will be outshined by Dante's.[8] But in *Fresca rosa novella* Primavera is no mere precursor. Rather, she is *prima vera*—a feminized name indicating that the "first" (*prima*) is the "true" (*vera*): that what the Aristotelians called First Philosophy, what the Latin translation of Averroes's *LC* calls the subject matter studied by the First Philosopher, the *Primus Philosophus* (*Ea que sunt abstracta in rei veritate intendit Primus Philosophus* ["The First Philosopher deals with things which are truly separate (from matter)"]), what Dante in *Convivio* (when explaining that his lady is Metaphysics) calls *la primaia e vera filosofia*,[9] and what Descartes still called *Prima Philosophia*—Metaphysics—is the domain of philosophy that is true (*vera*) in the highest sense. And it is human knowledge of metaphysical realities—separate substances—that Cavalcanti rules out with *Fresca rosa novella*, as he will in *Donna me prega*—for *chi poria pensare oltra natura* ("who could think beyond nature")? Who could go beyond (*meta*) natural science (physics)?

The much-praised sonnet *Chi è questa che vèn* offers perhaps the clearest expression of Cavalcanti's core view that there is no salvation for humans, since metaphysical knowledge is beyond human reach:

Chi è questa che vèn, ch'ogn'om la mira,
che fa tremar di chiaritate l'âre
e mena seco Amor, sì che parlare
null'omo pote, ma ciascun sospira?
O Deo, che sembra quando li occhi gira!
dical' Amor, ch'i' nol savria contare:
cotanto d'umiltà donna mi pare,
ch'ogn'altra ver' di lei i' la chiam' ira.
Non si poria contar la sua piagenza,
ch'a le' s'inchin' ogni gentil vertute,
e la Beltate per sua dea la mostra.
Non fu sì alta già la mente nostra
e non si pose 'n noi tanta salute,
che propriamente n'aviàn canoscenza.

(IV)

(Who is she who comes, that everyone looks at her, who makes the air tremble [or: flicker] with clarity [or: brightness] and brings Love with her, so that no one can speak, but everyone sighs? O God, how she seems when she turns her eyes! Let Love say it, for I could not tell it: she seems to me a lady of such humility [*umiltà*] that any other,

> in comparison to her, I call anger [*ira*]. One could not describe her pleasure: for every noble virtue bends toward her, and Beauty points toward her as its goddess. Our mind [*la nostra mente*] never was so lofty and never was such salvation [or, "health," "power": *salute*] granted us that we properly have knowledge [*canoscenza*] of her.)

This is not a typical love poem: here the "I" does not maintain or express any wish to maintain a special, individual, or exclusive relation with the Lady. It is not the lover alone but rather "everyone" (*ogn'om*; line 1) who looks at the Lady and "each person" (*ciascun*; line 4) who consequently sighs.[10] Although she is certainly unique and extraordinary, there is nothing anomalous about what is stated here: a set of natural facts that pertain always and everywhere for all humans—i.e., what we might call the human condition.[11] Thus the closing tercet asserts things concerning "our mind" (*la mente nostra*; line 12), things about "us" (*'n noi*; line 13). These things amount to an insistently negative assessment of our epistemological powers.[12]

Commentators agree that the sonnet's opening, *Chi è questa che ven . . . ?* ("Who is this [woman] who is coming . . . ?"), calques Biblical language; most point to the Song of Songs as the most significant source.[13] Literally, Cavalcanti's language is closest to Isaiah 63:1, *Quis est iste, qui venit [de Edom?]* ("Who is this [man], who is coming [from Edom]?"). In Isaiah, this man is the Messiah, and he comes to bring salvation: *propugnator sum ad salvandum* ("I am the champion for one who is to be saved"; Isaiah 63:1). This Old Testament verse is particularly relevant, since Cavalcanti's sonnet closes with the question concerning our *salute* ("power," "health," "salvation"; line 13). Where the Bible speaks of a man who comes for those who will be saved, here we have the Lady who comes and is looked at with incomprehension by those—all humans—for whom there is no salvation.

We can confirm with certainty that, for Cavalcanti, this Lady is the Active Intellect.[14] Using the ubiquitous Arabo-Aristotelian analogy for the Active Intellect's illuminating the intelligible forms in the Possible Intellect—light's making the potentially transparent medium (e.g., air) transparent *in actu*—, the poem designates the Lady as she "who makes the air flicker with brightness" (or, "tremble with clarity": *che fa tremar di chiaritate l'âre*; line 2). What our mind (*la mente nostra*; line 12) cannot, properly or properly speaking (*propriamente*; line 14), apprehend in the mode of knowledge (*canoscenza*; line 14), what is too high for our mental powers to grasp, is the Active Intellect—i.e., a pure Intelligence.[15]

In this sonnet the "I" tells us that he cannot speak of, because he does not know, the Lady. Nor can anyone else speak of her: "no one can speak" (*parlare/null'omo pote*; lines 3–4). He also indicates that love *can* speak (*dical' Amor, ch'i' nol savria*; "let Love say it, for I would not be able to"; line 6). But of what might Love speak?

Before we address this question, we should clarify the situation involving the direction of the Lady's glance. The trope of the Lady's eyes (*li occhi*; line 5) is among Cavalcanti's most frequent. Usually the path of the look or glance—which sometimes happens, sometimes does not happen, and other times is hoped for or feared—is a direct one linking the eyes of the lover and the Lady. But here she turns to look not at the lover but at Love, the companion whom she brings with her (*mena seco Amor*; "she brings Love with her"; line 3). If Love might possibly speak of the Lady, it is because she has turned her eyes toward Love: "O God, how she seems when she turns her eyes/let Love say, for I would not be able to tell" (*O Deo, che sembra quando li occhi gira!/dical' Amor, ch'i' nol savria contare*; lines 5–6). Love's status as something of an authority on the Lady derives from the fact that she looks at Love. Apparently, the Lady looks at Love but not at us humans. In this sonnet, everyone is looking at her (*ogn'om la mira*, "everyone looks at her"; line 1) but she looks at no one, at no human. In fact, the Active Intellect has no interest in and no knowledge of particulars; while it knows the universal intelligible form of the human species, it has no regard for you or for me as individual humans.

Love can speak of the Lady because she looks at him. Of what, more precisely, does Love speak? The poem tells us, clearly and concisely: Love can speak of *che sembra*, "what she seems" like to Love (line 5). That is, Love would speak of a *semblance*, a similitude, but not directly of the Lady. Perhaps Love knows the Lady (the poem is silent on this question). Yet what we might hear from Love is not knowledge of the Lady but discourse concerning a similitude: Love can provide for us an image of an image. Love is poised as an intermediary between knowledge (*canoscenza*; line 14) of the Lady's essence (knowledge properly speaking [*propriamente*; line 14])—and our imagination. This reminds us of a poem, also involving our *mente*, that we treated above in Part Two: *De vil matera mi conven parlare* (Cavalcanti's part in one of his *tenzoni* with Guido Orlandi). Recall that there Love discourses in the lover's *mente*—not about the Lady but rather about how to express Love's outward appearance. The lesson (adapted for our present purposes) of that sonnet is that Love teaches that the Lady's essence never appears in Love's language. In the *mente*, Love provides language about the Lady without providing knowledge of the Lady herself: there is an irremediable deficiency in language (including Love's language) about the Lady, since her reality (as Intelligence) is supra-discursive. We cannot know the Active Intellect because we can only apprehend images, semblances. There is for us no salvation (*salute*; line 13) because the human soul does not have the strength (*salute*; line 13) to attain intellection of separate (i.e., metaphysical) substances. This poem is exemplary of Cavalcanti's general project, which is to stake out ground in the pessimist Averroist camp: there is no Conjunction in the strong sense, no Salvation of Intellect.

Lines 7–8 may appear at first sight a mere rhetorical flourish without a great deal of significance: "She appears to me [to be a] woman of such humility,/that compared to her I call all others anger" (*cotanto d'umiltà donna mi pare,/ch'ogn'altra ver' di lei i' la chiam' ira*). But the peculiar phrasing ("I call all other women anger"), perhaps as awkward in Italian as in English translation,[16] singles out *ira* for special attention. On a certain level this is relatively clear: humility, in contrast to anger—defined by Aristotle as a desire to return pain for pain—is a tranquil willingness to patiently bear offense. Nowadays we would consider humility in this sense to be a passive non-response to an aggression action; however, we will see that, philosophically, the lady's *umiltà* is active, while *ira* is passive.

Near the beginning of *De anima*, Aristotle asks whether affects of the soul (emotions) are necessarily embodied—or, are there any that do not involve the body? He mentions anger (*iracundia* in the Latin of Averroes's *LC*) first in a list of various emotions; from that point on, in the rest of the discussion, anger (*ira* in the Latin *LC*) serves in every case as the exemplary affect of the soul:

> A further problem presented by the affections of soul [*passionibus anime*] is this: are they all affections of the complex of body and soul, or is there any one of them peculiar to the soul by itself? To determine this is indispensable but difficult. If we consider the majority of them, there seems to be no case in which the soul can act or be acted upon without involving the body; e.g. anger [*iracundia*], courage, appetite, and sensation generally. Understanding [*intelligere*] seems to be the most probable exception; but if this too proves to be a form of imagination [*ymaginatio*] or to be impossible without imagination, it too requires a body as a condition of its existence. . . . Consequently, the definitions—for example, of what anger [*ira*] is—ought to correspond, e.g., anger [*ira*] should be defined as a certain mode of movement of such and such a body (or part or faculty of a body) by this or that cause and for this or that end. . . . [But] a physicist would define an affection of the soul differently from a dialectician; the latter would define, e.g. anger [*ira*] as the appetite for returning pain for pain, or something like that, while the former would describe it as a boiling of the blood or warm substance surrounding the heart. . . . But we must return from this digression and repeat that the affections of soul [*passiones anime*] . . . are inseparable from the natural matter of animals.[17]

All others, except for the Lady, says Cavalcanti, are *ira*[18]—which is to say that they all require a body as a condition of their existence. This, in turn, amounts to saying that the Lady is a metaphysical entity. Aristotle postulates that there may be one movement of the soul that, in contrast

to all others (see line 8: *ogn'altra*, "all others"), does not require a body—namely, *intelligere*. He also conjectures that human intellect may turn out to be a form of imagination (this is the position that Averroes will take in *LC*), in which case, properly speaking, it is not Intellect (*Nous*). This contrast in Aristotle between *intelligere* in its pure form and human imagination (*ymaginatio*) is figured in Cavalcanti's sonnet as the contrast between the essence of the Lady herself and the movements of the human mind, which cannot handle forms higher than the semblances and images presented by Love's speech. And the contrast between the Lady and *ira* is the contrast between the nonmaterial Active Intellect and the enmattered human *mente*.

Aristotle defines *ira* as "a certain mode of movement . . . *by this or that cause*." What the Latin of *LC* terms *passiones anime* are *movements caused by*: they are moved, not movers—passive, not active. In *Chi è questa che vèn*, the contrast between the Lady's *umiltà*—her tranquility of affect[19]—and the *ira* of all others identifies the Lady as mover not moved, productive not produced, as active: the Active Intellect.

Cavalcanti's poetry is obsessed with the prospect—or rather the lack thereof—of the human soul's mortality. Suggestively enigmatic yet exquisitely precise, the sonnet *O tu, che porti nelli occhi sovente*, a gem-like marvel of philosophical-psychological lyric, laments the fact that humans are from the start condemned to death:

O tu, che porti nelli occhi sovente
Amor tenendo tre saette in mano,
questo mio spirto che vien di lontano
ti raccomanda l'anima dolente,
la quale ha già feruta nella mente
di due saette l'arciere soriano;
a la terza apre l'arco, ma sì piano
che non m'aggiunge essendoti presente:
perché saria dell'alma la salute,
che quasi giace infra le membre, morta
di due saette che fan tre ferute:
la prima dà piacere e disconforta,
e la seconda disia la vertute,
della gran gioia che la terz'aporta.

(XX)

(O you, who often contain in your eyes Love [who is] holding three arrows in hand, this spirit of mine that comes from afar commends to you the mournful soul, which the Syrian archer [i.e., Love] has truly wounded in the mind [*mente*] with two arrows; he bends the bow for the third but, you being present [*essendoti presente*], it does not reach me [*non m'aggiunge*: "it does not join/unite with me"]: for

> it would be the salvation [*salute*] of the soul, which all but lies dead together with the [bodily] members, from two arrows that make three wounds: the first gives pleasure and pain, and the second desires the virtue of the great joy that the third brings about.)

There are some strange things going on here. First, although the Syrian archer has shot and struck the lover with two arrows, wounding him in the *mente* (lines 5–6), this is not the reason why the lover's soul is "all but dead" (*quasi . . . morta*; line 10). It is not these wounds that kill but the lack of a wound from the third, unreleased arrow, the one that does not reach the lover because it stays always present with the Lady. The soul is killed or virtually so because an arrow is never shot. This third arrow has the power to cure or to kill, yet in an unexpected manner: if it were shot and wounded the lover, his soul would be saved ("it would be the salvation/healing of the soul" [*saria dell'alma la salute*]; line 9); it kills through an act of omission: not being struck by this arrow is the cause of the lover's death. Contact with the Lady via some force of which she is the provenance, a Conjunction (*aggiunge* [line 8]: "to join one thing with another" = *congiungere*, "to join, connect, link"), would be the salvation of the soul. Second, there is an odd incongruity between the number of arrows that are launched (two) and the number of wounds in the soul or *mente* (three). Valid interpretation of this sonnet must account for these anomalies; and, given that they stand out in a way that begs inquiry, we can presume that they are the poem's most significant loci of meaning.

Speaking very broadly, for Aristotle there are three kinds or categories of soul: (1) the vegetative-nutritive; (2) the sensitive-imaginative; (3) the rational-intellective. All living creatures possess at least the first kind of soul, the capacity to nourish, grow, and generate; plants and other low-level organisms possess *only* this kind. The second kind of soul is the capacity to perceive sensations and to form images; those creatures that we nowadays call "animals" possess this second kind in combination with the first one (although many animal species cannot form images). Only humankind among living creatures possesses, in addition to the first two, the third kind of soul, the capacity to reason and to know. Reasoning and knowing are two distinct facets of this third kind of soul; the former, involving *praxis*, is often termed *ratio* in the Latin tradition, while the latter, involving *theoria*, is often termed *intellectus*. The mainstream of Latin scholastic philosophy, e.g. Aquinas, insists that humans are endowed with both these powers; this insistence is the centerpiece of his polemic against Averroes, who (generally speaking) denies that humans possess the power of *intellectus*.

Now, a poem such as this, which invokes a triad (the three arrows) in the context of psychology, naturally leads us to think of Aristotle's three types of soul. But it would be hasty simply to match up each arrow

with one of the three kinds of soul. For one thing, there is no trace of the vegetative-nutritive soul in Cavalcanti's sonnet. The key to sorting out the arrows is to bear in mind the distinction within the rational (i.e., human) soul between *ratio* and *intellectus*. As we will see presently, the sonnet's three arrows correspond to (1) the sensitive-imaginative power, (2) the rational power, and (3) the intellective power—in short, to *imaginatio*, *ratio*, and *intellectus*.

In *O tu, che porti nelli occhi sovente*, the human soul is as good as dead (*quasi morta*) because the third of three arrows that might conceivably be shot at the *mente/anima* from on high—i.e., *intellectus*—does not reach its destination; more precisely, that arrow has no destination, since it is always perpetually present with the Lady (*essendoti presente*; line 8).[20] As we will see in our Long Commentary, this nonexistent trajectory from the Lady to the lover is the perpetual presence of Intellect with Itself (*in sé perpetual effetto* [*Donna me prega,* line 26]): the Possible Intellect as the eternally actual substrate of the intelligible forms activated by the Active Intellect. This sonnet is above all an assertion that humankind does not possess the capacity for intellection. In Cavalcanti's view, humans cannot think thoughts totally free from an animal-like dependence on imagination. Guido's love lyric is a philosophical longing for knowledge in the proper sense (intellection), yet at the same time an unfaltering insistence that such knowledge is never possible. Cavalcanti is a poet-philosopher who incessantly laments the fact that he is not an Intellect.

The first arrow, then, bestows the power of the sensitive-imaginative soul; the second arrow bestows the power of reason/*ratio*. The third arrow is the power of intellection, but it is not meant for us, being present (*essendo presente*) always with the Lady. The closing tercet provides splendid confirmation of our reading:

> la prima dà piacere e disconforta,
> e la seconda disia la vertute,
> 14 della gran gioia che la terz'aporta.

"The first [arrow] gives pleasure and pain" (line 12). For Aristotle, pleasure and pain are the fundamental principles of the sensitive-imaginative soul: all of that soul's motions, whether triggered by sensation or imagination, aim to pursue the pleasurable or avoid the painful. The "second [arrow] desires virtue [or: 'desires the virtue. . .'; line 13]." As we will see in our Long Commentary (and in fact the whole of *Donna me prega* revolves around this), *ratio* is the power that desires/loves, and its desiring is synonymous with ethical virtue, practical reason—the properly and specifically human, the human *qua* human. Those two arrows reach their destination: humans, like animals, have a sensitive-imaginative soul (the first arrow), but unlike animals, their sensitive-imaginative soul

includes the power of *ratio* (the second arrow), reasoning in the realm of *praxis*/ethics/virtue. Yet the highest ethical aim, according to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, is to live the *bios theoretikos*, the life of contemplation (*nous/intellectus/speculatio*). And so, the second arrow desires the *vertute*, this time in the sense of power/capacity (Latin *virtus*), of the third arrow: "the second desires the power/of the great joy that the third brings" (line 14). "But this would be too high for man," says Aristotle. Still, it is virtuous to desire a power (*virtus*) that we can never possess!

It is Aquinas (who, following the lead of his master Albertus Magnus, often strays closer to the Arabs than to Thomism) who provides us the perfect blueprint for Cavalcanti's sonnet:

> In a human, however, we find: *first*, a *sensitive* nature [*natura sensitiva*] which is common with the brute animals; [and *second*,] *practical reason* [*ratio pratica*], which is proper to the human level of reality; and [*third*,] *theoretical intellect* [*intellectus speculativus*], which is not found in a human as completely as in the angels, but according to a kind of participation. Therefore, the *contemplative life* [i.e., the *bios theoretikos*] is not properly human, but superhuman; while the life of *pleasure* [see line 12: *piacere*], which is bound up in sensual goods, is not human but bestial. Therefore, the properly human way of life is the active life, which consists in living out the *moral virtues* [*virtutum moralium*].[21]

Here in Aquinas the human soul has three levels of power, the highest of which (*intellectus*) they do not possess in the proper sense but only by a kind of participation. If for Thomas intellection is somewhat within human reach, in Cavalcanti's Averroist view it is entirely beyond our capacity.[22]

The canzone *Io non pensava che lo cor giammai* offers perhaps the clearest expression of the thought that motivates Cavalcanti's love poems and that moves the lyric "I" to tears and distressed rumination. The second of the canzone's four stanzas tells us in nearly explicit fashion that humans are situated on the lower side of the ontological divide that separates immortal (metaphysical) from mortal (physical) entities:

> Di questa donna non sì può contare:
> ché di tante bellezze adorna vène,
> che mente di qua giù no la sostene
> sì che la veggia lo 'ntelletto nostro.
> Tant'è gentil, che, quand'eo penso bene,
> l'anima sento per lo cor tremare,
> sì come quella che non pò durare
> davanti al gran valor ch'è i·llei dimostro.
> Per gli occhi fere sua claritate,

sì che quale mi vede
dice: "Non guardi tu? Quest'è Pietate,
ch'è posta invece di persona morta
per dimandar merzede."
E non si n'è madonna ancor accorta!

(IX, 15–28)

(One cannot give an account [*contare*] of this Lady, for she comes endowed with so many beauties that the here-below mind [*mente di qua giù*] cannot endure to the point that our intellect [*lo 'ntelletto nostro*] might see her. She is so noble that, when I think on it deeply, I sense the soul tremble through the heart, as that which cannot last faced with the great power that is demonstrated in her. Her splendor strikes through the eyes, so that whoever sees me says, "Look over there! [literally: 'Aren't you looking?'] This is Suffering set in place of a dead person, to ask for mercy." And yet my Lady is not aware of this!)

The Lady cannot be seen by "our intellect" (*lo 'ntelletto nostro*; line 18): there is no human power of theoretical/speculative intellection of metaphysical Intelligences. The sheer number of intelligible forms of *naturalia* (figured here as the "so many beauties" [*tante bellezze*; line 16] with which the Lady comes endowed) contained by the receptacle that is the Possible Intellect exceeds the human capacity to count (*contare*; line 15) and to give an account (= a *logos*) of them all; thus, in Farabian terms, we cannot gather the critical mass of intellections that would trigger our transformation from human to superhuman. While Cavalcanti does speak here as if we have intellect, this is not *intellectus* properly speaking but only equivocally: it is *our* kind of "intellect"—what Averroes calls passible intellect, which is a kind of imagination ("passible" indicating, in part, that it suffers change and is mortal). Such intellect is in fact *mente*, a sublunary, physical, and hence mortal power that involves imagination and discursive figuration: the "mind that is down here" (*mente di qua giù*; line 17). The *Io*, having had proven (*dimostro*: "demonstrated"; line 22) to his satisfaction—through a labor of thinking (*quand'eo penso bene* ["when I think about it thoroughly"]; line 19) and through comparison with the great (ontological) nobility (*gran valor*; line 22) of the Lady—that the human soul is a "thing that cannot last" (*quella che non pò durare*; line 21), senses fearful trembling of the soul in the heart (line 20). The soul here is an object of sense-perception (*l'anima sento*: "I sense the soul"; line 20): it is physical, generable and corruptible, impermanent. This difficult lesson strikes the thinker with such clarity (line 23) that it affects his somatic appearance: onlookers, instinctively realizing that he has in effect passed away, take him for a figure of Suffering,[23] positioned in place

of a dead person and signifying a petition for mercy. Yet the typically Cavalcantian indifference of the Lady to the lover's suffering (or, more precisely, her remaining always ignorant of his personal plight: "And yet my Lady is not aware of it!"; line 28) reminds us that the Cosmos is merciless: the Active Intellect does not know particulars; the eternal order of reality is what it is.

It is not a coincidence that this stanza employs language suggestive of philosophical labor: attempting to render an account (*contare*; line 15), that is, a *logos* or definition; thinking correctly (*pensare bene*; see line 19); demonstration (*dimostro*, "demonstrated"; line 22).[24] Although the meaning of the figure of Love is slippery and shifting in Cavalcanti's corpus, oftentimes Love means discourse on or teachings concerning the Lady—in short, Philosophy (the Love of Wisdom). In this canzone Love comes as close as ever to meaning precisely that: those things that the philosopher learns as he advances in a curriculum that leads to inquiry in metaphysics. The c*ongedo* of the closing stanza confirms this, as the poet bids farewell to his song: *Canzon, tu sai che de' libri d'Amore/ io t'asemplai quando Madonna vidi* ("Song, you know that I copied you from the books of Love/as [i.e., 'while': *quando*] I saw my Lady"; lines 43–44). Both verbs in line 44 (*asemplai*, *vidi*) are in the same past tense, and the *quando* (when/while/as) is a marker of simultaneity: for the poet, writing what one has learned reading philosophy (the books of Love are the books of *Philo*-sophy) is in effect the same event as seeing the Lady.[25] In several of his love lyrics, Cavalcanti's distress is that of the philosopher growing more and more disturbed by the invidious truths that he nonetheless will not deny.

In this case Love's lessons are quoted literally in previous stanzas—the gist of the first being that the insurmountable gap between the Lady's nobility and the lover's is such that the lover will not escape his ontological limitations:

> Non sentìo pace né riposo alquanto
> poscia ch'Amore e madonna trovai,
> lo qual mi disse: "Tu non camperai,
> 8 ché troppo è lo valor di costei forte."
>
> (IX, 5–8)

> (I have not felt peace or any rest since I discovered [*trovai*] Love and my Lady—[Love], the one who stated: "You will not survive/last/ live on [*campare*], for her worth/nobility is too great.")

With these verses, Guido is reporting what he has learned from the *libri d'Amore*. If the lover at some time found (discovered/encountered: *trovare*) the Lady, it is only insofar as he found Love, who as usual is an intermediary, more a screen from than a conduit to the Lady. The lover

of Wisdom discovers her through Love (i.e., through the statements in Love's books), not directly. To encounter Love is to encounter the Lady in the only way that she can be encountered by humans: as something that can never be truly encountered, never properly joined. For what Love states here is that humans lack the ontological status (*lo valor*; line 8) that would potentiate a transformation from human to superhuman, mortal to immortal: "You will not escape" (*Tu non camperai*; line 7 [that is to say: "You will never get out of this world alive"]). Due to the radical hierarchical difference between animals (including rational animals) and Intelligences, there is no Conjunction in the strong, optimist sense—that is, of the kind that would guarantee that one will survive (line 7: *camperai*) the death of the body.

In the canzone's third stanza, the lover tells us that Love himself reports another lesson that Love had previously taught the lover:

> Quando 'l pensier mi vèn ch'i' voglia dire
> a gentil core de la sua vertute,
> i' trovo me di sì poca salute,
> ch' i' non ardisco di star nel pensero.
> Amor, c'ha le bellezze sue vedute,
> mi sbigottisce sì, che sofferire
> non può lo cor sentendola venire,
> ché sospirando dice: "Io ti dispero,
> però che trasse del su' dolce riso
> una saetta aguta,
> c'ha passato 'l tuo core e 'l mio diviso.
> Tu sai, quando venisti, ch'io ti dissi
> poi che l'avéi veduta,
> per forza convenia che tu morissi."
>
> (IX, 29–42)

> (When the thought comes to me that I should wish to speak to a noble heart of her virtue/power [*vertute*], I find that I have so little strength [*salute*] that I dare not dwell in the thought [*star nel pensero*]. Love, who has seen her beauties, so overwhelms me that the heart cannot bear sensing her approach, for [Love] says, sighing, "I leave you no hope, because she drew from her sweet smile a sharp arrow that has passed through your heart and divided mine. You know [that] when you came I warned you: as soon as you had seen her, it was inevitably conceded that you die.")

It would be tempting here to regard the "thought" (*pensero*; line 32) in which "I dare not remain" (*i' non ardisco di star*; line 32) as intellection in act[26]; in some accounts of the *falasifa* humans can conjoin with the Active Intellect and hence attain intellection of intelligible

forms (separate substances), albeit not continuously and for only brief intermittent durations. The danger of "remaining in the thought" is the danger of the permanent loss of self, since in the state of pure intellection the individual human as a determinate particular no longer retains the powers of remembering and loving—and thus for all intents and purposes no longer exists. But in this quatrain at least, the thought in which the *Io* dares not dwell is not such a lofty thought; it is not pure conceptualization. Rather, the thought that he dares not sustain concerns his own will, his desire to speak to a like-minded noble heart concerning the Lady's *vertute* (*'l pensier mi vèn ch'i' voglia dire/a gentil core de la sua vertute* ["the thought comes to me that I should wish (or, desire: *voglia*) to speak/to a noble heart of her virtue (or, power: *vertute*)"]; lines 29–30). The lover's thinking here is not, even if but for a brief time, located in the realm of intelligible forms; it is, rather, thinking operative in the realm of human *praxis*, involving imagining what one ought to do or not do.

In this stanza, the "I" has not seen the Lady's beauties, for only Love has: *Amor, c'ha le bellezze sue vedute* ("Love, who has seen her beauties"; line 33). These beauties are those *tante belleze* already mentioned in line 16: the intelligible forms contained in the receptacle that is the Possible Intellect. Here Love has warned the lover that his seeing the Lady would entail his death, the annihilation of his status as a subject/substrate, the dissolution of the self in the nonmaterial realm of pure universals (lines 40–42). Although Love himself seems shielded from the danger of death, he is nonetheless in some sense wounded: "she drew from her sweet smile/a sharp arrow/that has passed through your heart and divided mine" (lines 37–39). If the human lover, generable and corruptible like all other physical entities, is mortally wounded (the arrow has passed clean through his heart), Love, for his part, is not unscathed: he is himself *diviso* (line 39), marked by partition. This is surely enigmatic, as Cavalcanti's figures so often are, yet we ought still to venture to interpret. Love for Cavalcanti seems in part to function as a figure for *logos* (*ratio*), for truth as a discursive account or logical formulation of a reality that is non-discursive. Love has perhaps seen the Lady, intellecting her in a pure act of *theoria*, the immediate seeing that is *nous* (*intellectus*); still, Love cannot give an account that is not *logos*—hence the partition between Love as *logos* and as *nous*.

Two of Cavalcanti's canzoni break off abruptly after the first stanza (rather than developing fully into the canzone's normal size of four or five stanzas). In both cases (the poem to be discussed presently and *Poi che di doglia cor conven ch'i porti*, which we will not treat here), the stanza seems to be leading inexorably to the death of the "I" as subject/substrate—after which nothing remains but silence. The 13-verse canzone *Se m'ha del tutto oblïato Merzede* comes to a halt with the lover's

imaginary dissolution into the Lady, as the "I" fantasizes his telling the Lady that "I" am "all yours":

Se m'ha del tutto oblïato Merzede,
già però Fede — il cor non abandona,
anzi ragiona — di servire a grato
al dispietato — core.
E qual sì sente simil me, ciò crede.
Ma chi tal vede? — Certo non persona:
ch'Amor mi dona — un spirito 'n su' stato
che, figurato — more;
che, quando lo piacer mi stringe tanto
che lo sospir si mova,
par che nel cor mi piova
un dolce amor sì bono
ch'eo dico: "Donna, tutto vostro sono."

(XIV)

(If Mercy has entirely forgotten me, nonetheless Faith [*Fede*] does not abandon the heart but rather reckons [*ragiona*] to serve the remorseless heart freely/gratefully [*a grato*]. And he who, like me, feels this way believes this [*ciò crede*]. But who sees such a thing [as what follows here]? Surely no one[27]: that Love gives me a spirit [*spirito*] of his [or: of her] rank [*stato*: status] that, figured, dies; for, when pleasure grips me so that sighing is activated [*si mova*], it seems [*par*] that in the heart rains down on me a sweet love so good that I say, "Lady, I am all yours.")

Interestingly, this poem seems in part nearly a declaration of faith (*Fede*, line 2), of belief or creed (*crede*, line 5)—but if so, this is a rational faith, a faith that reasons (*Fede . . . ragiona* ["Faith . . . reasons"]; lines 2–3): the religion of the philosophers. The salvation offered by that religion, as figured here, is imaginary: lines 9–13 are a wish-fulfillment fantasy through which the lover stages his disappearance, his absolute dissolution into the Lady. In this imaginary scenario, he doesn't merely *see* the Lady but rather he *becomes* her[s]: *Donna, tutto vostro sono* (line 13). This becoming the Lady herself is becoming the Sun (i.e., the Active Intellect) itself as imagined, for instance, by Ibn Bajja's version of Plato's Allegory of the Cave.[28]

Love gives (*dona*) the lover "a spirit of his [or: her] status/rank" (*un spirito 'n su' stato*; line 7). This notion that there are degrees, or a graded ranking of spirit, is very much in keeping with Ibn Bajja's key doctrine of the hierarchy of spiritual forms.[29] ("Spiritual form" is another name for what we will come to know as the *intentio* in our Long Commentary on *Donna me prega*: an image apprehended, to various

degrees of abstraction, by the soul's various internal faculties of sensation.) In his *Epitome of Parva Naturalia* Averroes—no doubt influenced by Ibn Bajja—uses the term "spiritual forms" in this sense and speaks of "spiritual stages" of the form of a sensed object as it undergoes a series of increasingly pure abstractions.

Which sort of spiritual form does Love give the lover? And, what effect does that donation have on the lover? Regarding the first of these questions: the spirit that Love gives (*dona*) is clearly lofty—but how lofty? The highest kind of spiritual form (which Ibn Bajja terms general spiritual form and which Averroes calls *intentio intellecta or res abstractum*) is intelligible form. Recall that for al-Farabi, when we have acquired all or almost all of the intelligible forms of *naturalia*, we are transformed to a nobler level of existence, a rank (i.e., a *status* = *stato*, line 7) higher than the one given by nature; we come to resemble the separate substances, and we arrive at a most elevated spiritual rank:

> Nothing that is a body or that is in a body is an intelligible by virtue of its substance, and the substance of none of them is at the *rank* of an actual intellect. The Active Intellect is what makes them actual intelligibles and makes some of them [i.e., some humans] actual intellects by raising them from their level of existence to a *level* higher than the one given them by nature. . . . Once the rational faculty becomes an actual intellect, that intellect (which is now actual) comes to resemble the separate things, by intellecting itself as actually an intellect. . . . It is as a result of this that it arrives at the *rank* of the Active Intellect. Once man arrives at this *rank*, his happiness is perfect. . . . Although the Active Intellect itself is singular, its *rank* nonetheless accommodates whatever part of the rational animal is freed of matter and attains happiness. The Active Intellect ought to be called the "protective *spirit*" and the "holy *spirit*"—since it is given names similar to these two—and its *rank* ought to be called "the heavenly kingdom" and other such names.[30]

Recall also that, especially in the Latin reception of Avicenna, human actual intellection came to be conceived as only ever attainable thanks to an illumination from above, an influx into the human intellect of intelligible forms emanating from the Active Intellect—in short, a gift of grace. In this Augustinian and inaccurate rendition of Avicenna's teaching on intellection, the great Arabic philosopher was thought to have termed the Active Intellect the *Dator Formarum*, the "Giver of Forms"—the notion being that we cannot acquire intelligible forms on our own but must be given them by the Active Intellect. Is Cavalcanti, with line 7 ("Love gives me a spirit [= form] of his [or: her] rank" [*Amor mi dona un spirito 'n su' stato*]), representing this donation from

above of an intelligible form (= spirit) to our human intellect? If so, one might perhaps propose that the lover attains that perfect happiness that al-Farabi describes thus:

> Man, who was potentially an intellect, becomes actually and perfectly an intellect, until he *all but reaches the rank* of the Active Intellect. So, man becomes an intellect *per se* after he was not, and an intelligible *per se* after he was not, and a divine substance after having been a material one.[31]

Is the effect of Love's donation of a form of his or of the Lady's rank the lover's attainment of perfect happiness as described here? Does the sonnet promote faith in the full-blown optimist version of the Conjunction with the Active Intellect?

There are problems with this reading, whether we take line 7 as "Love gives me a spirit [= form] of Love's rank" or "Love gives me a spirit of the Lady's rank." If this is a form of the Lady's rank (that is, if *su' stato* means "her *stato*"), Love's donation amounts to the lover's intellection of a separate substance—certainly no small attainment for the lover. Yet this still falls short of the complete identification ("I am all yours"; line 13) of the knower and the known, the divinization of the seeing subject, as postulated in full-blown optimist versions of the Conjunction. All things considered, the consensus reading of *su' stato* as "his (i.e. Love's) *stato*" is preferable. Since it is Love not the Lady who gives the *spirito*, that donated spiritual form cannot be the Lady's: forms such as hers (separate substances) are not within Love's power to give. Love gives the lover something less than the sort of form—i.e., intelligible form—that would be given by the Giver of Forms, the Active Intellect.

Reading line 7 as "Love gives me a spiritual form of Love's rank," the question, then, is this: what is Love's rank? We have seen above that Love, as an intermediary, shuttles back and forth between being with or within the Lady and being away from her and in the presence of the lover. We have seen, as well, that Love describes himself as *diviso* (IX, 39). Insofar as Love is with or within the Lady (IV, 3; XX, 1–2; XX, 8; IX, 6; IX, 33), Love is *nous* (*intellectus*): as al-Farabi says, "although the Active Intellect itself is singular, its rank nonetheless accommodates whatever part of the rational animal is freed of matter"—which is to say that the Active Intellect accommodates *nous* (*intellectus*); insofar as Love discourses with the lover, Love is *logos* (*ratio*). Love is both quasi-human and superhuman, and he is divided between these two states. Love, then, has *two* ranks. The spiritual form that Love gives the lover is no doubt not Ibn Bajja's general spiritual form or Averroes's *res abstractum*; rather, it retains at least traces of the state of an *intentio imaginata*, a particular spiritual form. As *nous*, Love can see, and as

logos Love can discourse; but, lacking the power to make things visible, Love cannot make others see. Love may be a theorist but is not the Sun: he is not Active Intellect. Since Love lacks the active power to make things visible, the best he can do for the lover is to give a spiritual form at the lower of Love's two ranks—the rank of *ratio*. The lover connects with Love but does not conjoin with the Active Intellect, and so the final verse's *Donna, tutto vostro sono* (the beatitude of whatever part of the rational soul is freed of matter) can only be a fantasy.

If Love were able to make the lover see, Love would have the power to give an intelligible form, and so lines 7–8 (*Amor mi dona un spirito 'n su' stato/che, figurato, more*) would mean this: the intelligible form given by Love to the lover, as pure form, cannot be expressed (*figurato*: "figured," signified via a similitude or a representation or particulars).[32] When *nous/intellectus* is translated into *logos/ratio*, it is, for one who would apprehend it, gone. But in truth Love lacks that power to give an intelligible form (the power possessed exclusively by the Lady), and so these lines mean the following: Love gives the lover a spiritual form that *is figure* (i.e., particular not universal; *phantasia/imaginatio*) and, as such, is generable and corruptible, mortal. This figure is *spirito*, spiritual form, in the true if not most noble sense of the term: form that is still ensouled, enmattered. Death here is the mortality of the human passible intellect as demonstrated by Averroes in what is perhaps the most crucial discussion in *LC* (see above, Part Three). Accordingly, the canzone ends abruptly with what Love has the power to give: a mortal fantasy, the rhetorically colored and figured reverie of a Conjunction with the Active Intellect.

For Averroes, humans *can* have knowledge, a scientific apprehension of the truth. But even in its highest mode this human knowing is enmattered: its substrate is an image produced by our faculty of imagination. Hence the theoretical knowledge possessed by humans is generable and corruptible, not eternal and unchanging. Humans can experience a connection with the world of intelligible forms, a quasi-conjunction, but there is no divinization of the human intellect, no Conjunction with the Active Intellect that would amount to the salvation of the soul.

This quasi-conjunction in which human thinking remains imaginative and thus enmattered is skillfully represented by Cavalcanti in the sonnet *Io vidi li occhi dove Amor si mise*:

Io vidi li occhi dove Amor si mise
quando mi fece di sé pauroso,
che mi guardar com'io fosse noioso:
allora dico che 'l cor si divise;
e se non fosse che la donna rise,
i' parlerei di tal guisa doglioso,
ch'Amor medesmo ne faria cruccioso,

che fe' lo immaginar che mi conquise.
Dal ciel si mosse un spirito, in quel punto
che quella donna mi degnò guardare,
e vennesi a posar nel mio pensero:
e lì mi conta sì d'Amor lo vero,
che ogni sua virtù veder mi pare
sì com' io fosse nello suo cor giunto.

(XXIII)

(I saw the eyes where Love settled in when he made me afraid of himself, which regarded me as if I were lackluster: it was then I say that my heart was broken; and if it were not for the fact that the Lady smiled, I would speak sadly in such a way that Love himself would be distressed—[Love], who made the imagining [*lo immaginar*] that won me over [*mi conquise* (*conquistare* = *persuadere*, "to persuade")]. From heaven a spirit [*spirito*] started moving, at that moment when that Lady deigned to look on me, and it came to lodge in my mind [*pensero*], and there it recounts to me the truth about Love in such a way that I seem to see each of her virtues, as if I were joined [*giunto*] in her heart.)

By now we have sharpened our eyes to Cavalcanti's discourse to the degree that this poem poses little difficulty; here we can dispense with extended exegesis and simply paraphrase philosophically.

Love, as *nous*, was there with the lady (*dove Amor si mise*; line 1). The lover saw the eyes, those instruments by which one can see (*Io vidi li occhi*; line 1), and he himself began to see: he began to learn the ways of Love as *ratio*, as demonstrative reasoning. (For Dante, who likely learned this from Cavalcanti, the *occhi* of the Lady are her "demonstrations."[33]) One of the lessons the lover learns is that, in the eyes of the divine and of the philosophers, humans are not especially impressive—they are even a bit annoying (*li occhi . . . mi guardar com'io fosse noioso*; lines 1–3). At that point, made fearful of philosophy (*Amor . . . mi fece di sé pauroso*; lines 1–2) and despondent, the lover's heart was broken (*allora dico che 'l cor si divise*; line 4). But then things turned around: the Lady smiled. And, had it not been for this smile (*se non fosse che la donna rise*; line 5), the lover would speak of philosophy so darkly and disparagingly that Love himself would be miserable (lines 6–7). (This smile is philosophy as rhetorical, as the persuasive encouragement to persist, as providing imaginative fantasies—such as, perhaps the fantasy of the Conjunction with the Active Intellect, of Salvation. For Dante, the Lady's smile signifies her "persuasions"—i.e., rhetoric.[34]) It was this imaginary salvation that won over the lover (*lo immaginar . . . mi conquise*; line 8).

At this point, beginning with line 9, the sonnet itself smiles, as it provides an imaginary fantasy of the Conjunction. The Active Intellect, gracing the lover with her look (*quella donna mi degnò guardare*; line 10) and smile, illuminated his mind: from on high was sent down a spiritual form (*spirito*; line 9) that took up residence in the lover's intellect as in a substrate (*vennesi a posar nel mio pensero*; line 11). The lover thereby possessed *theoria* (*ogni sua virtù veder*; line 13), the vision of the true (*lo vero*; line 12)—as if the lover were conjoined with the very core of the Active Intellect (*com'io fosse nello suo cor giunto*).

The Conjunction here is qualified as imaginary, yet it is not entirely fantastical, nor is the encouragement provided by the Lady's smile purely rhetorical. When she smiles on him, he has a lightbulb moment: he knows something true about the world. In this moment his faith in philosophy, his hope for science, is restored. Love's demonstrations enable his thinking to accommodate a spiritual form that, although passible (i.e., generable and corruptible), is nonetheless true. For humans, scientific apprehension, albeit passible, is indeed possible. Although the lover only *seems* to see (*veder mi pare*; "I seem to see," line 13), he does *hear*, the truth (*lo vero*; line 12). He does not have the power for *theoria* properly speaking, but he can receive—through an intermediary (the *spirito*) of an intermediary (Love)—an account (*logos*) of the true (*mi conta sì d'Amor lo vero*; line 12). This account, a spiritual form in his own intellect, is a truth-bearing image. What the lover does attain, then, is a quasi-conjunction, a connection with truth: *com'io fosse nello suo cor giunto* ("as if I were conjoined with her heart"; line 14). This quasi-conjunction is the truth known by human science: passible intellection. The lover, recognizing that every part of his self is mortal, can still hope for knowledge, and science has a gladdening effect. Cavalcanti is the poet of a thoroughly demystified Averroism.

We will conclude our excavation of the philosophical concerns that ground Cavalcanti's love lyrics with the astonishing ballad *Veggio negli occhi de la donna mia*—a poem that many have taken as expressing hope for a higher happiness, salvation in a religious sense.

Veggio negli occhi de la donna mia
un lume pien di spiriti d'amore,
che porta uno piacer novo nel core
sì che vi desta d'allegrezza vita.

Cosa m'aven, quand'i' le son presente,
ch'i' no la posso a lo 'ntelletto dire:
veder mi par de la sua labbia uscire
una sì bella donna, che la mente
comprender no la può, che 'mmantenente

ne nasce un'altra di bellezza nova,
da la qual par ch'una stella si mova
e dica: "La salute tua è apparita."

Là dove questa bella donna appare
s'ode una voce che le vèn davanti
e par che d'umiltà 'l su' nome canti,
sì dolcemente, che, s'i' 'l vo' contare,
sento che' l su' valor mi fa tremare;
e movonsi nell'anima sospiri
che dicon: "Guarda; se tu coste' miri,
vedra' la sua vertù nel ciel salita."

(XXVI)

(I see in the eyes of my lady a light full of spirits of love, that brings a new pleasure to my heart, such that it awakens there a life of joy. Something happens to me when I am in her presence, that I cannot express to the intellect [*lo'ntelletto*]: I seem to see issue from her lips [or, "face"] so beautiful a lady that the mind [*mente*] cannot understand her, for at once another of new beauty is born, by whom [or, from whom] a star seems to be moved [or, to come] and to say: "Your salvation [*salute*] has appeared." Where this beautiful lady appears a voice is heard that precedes her, and seems humbly to sing her name, so sweetly that, if I would tell it, I feel [*sento*] that its power makes me tremble; and in my soul [*anima*] are stirring sighs that say: "Look; if you gaze [*miri*] on that one, you will see her power [*vertù*] gone up to heaven.")

On the level of its literal narrative, this poem presents a truly bizarre and unprecedented scene: there is a multiplication of ladies, as two (or three) others emerge from Guido's act of looking at the initial lady—and thus there are in total three (or four) beauties.[35] *First* is the one called "my lady" (*la donna mia*), the one whose eyes (line 1) and face (line 7) Guido sees—a lady whom we may take to be a real flesh-and-blood woman; *second* is the lady who seems to issue from the face of the first, a "beautiful lady that the mind cannot understand" (lines 8–9); *third* is the one called "another of fresh beauty" who is "instantaneously . . . born" of the second lady (lines 9–10). Whether or not this procession results in a fourth entity is open to debate—the answer depending on one's reading of lines 10–11: *nasce un'altra di bellezza nova,/da la qual par ch'una stella si mova*. Does this mean "another of fresh beauty is born, from whom [then] a star seems to come"? Or does it mean "another of fresh beauty is born, by which a star seems to be moved"? Are we to place the emphasis on the star as the fourth and culminating stage of ascent (Lady 1 → Lady 2 → Lady 3 → **Star**),

or is the star simply a piece of information that helps identify the third lady, who is herself the culmination (Lady 1 → Lady 2 → **Lady 3** [who moves a star])? Both renderings are grammatically correct, and so the question needs to be decided on the basis of the doctrine that underlines the poem. Most commentators and translators have decided in favor of the former (a star emerges from the third lady) rather than the latter interpretation (the third lady moves a star).[36] In my view, the latter interpretation is to be preferred, for philosophical reasons that I will explain presently.

The ballad's second stanza (lines 5–12) represents the epistemological process of abstraction—a movement from physical sensation of a material thing to mental intellection of a pure form. As Aquinas explains (speaking, one should note, of "spiritual form"; see line 2: *spiriti*), intellection is not immediate but requires several intermediate phases:

> Because the distance between intelligible being and sensible material being is so extreme, the *form* of a material thing is not taken up by intellect right away but is brought to it through many intermediaries. So, the form of something sensible is initially in the medium, where it is more *spiritual* than in the sensible object, then it is in the organ of sense, next it is led to *phantasia* [i.e., the imaginative faculty] and to the other lower powers, and finally it is brought all the way to intellect.[37]

The various ladies who appear to Guido are these "many intermediaries"—covering a range from raw sense-perception to intellection of immaterial being. In Aquinas's account, there are numerous stages in the progressive spiritualization or abstraction from thing seen to form known: the sensible object (i.e., sensible material being) → the medium (i.e., the air that carries light from the sensible object to the organ of sense) → the organ of sense → the phantasia/imagination → the intellect. In Cavalcanti's ballad, the course of abstraction is reduced to its three key phases (represented poetically as Lady 1 → Lady 2 → Lady 3). Lady 1 is the form as it exists in the organ of sense; Lady 2 is the form as it exists in *phantasia* or imagination; Lady 3 is the form as pure intelligible, denuded of all materiality, intellected and received by the Possible Intellect: she is the intelligible form of a material entity, transformed (as al-Farabi says) into "one of the beings of the [metaphysical] world."

Among Cavalcanti's commentators, Antonio Gagliardi has come closest to understanding the poem. As he remarks, the second stanza describes "all the stages of knowledge . . . through a system of differences in which it is possible to read the trajectory of the *species* [i.e., form] in the various faculties: *species sensata, species ymaginata,*

species intellecta."[38] But Gagliardi misses the mark due to confusion on the question concerning the status of the star, which he sees as a fourth and culminating stage, a transformation of the third lady. In Gagliardi's view, Guido here recounts the emergence of a star from the third and last (or, highest) lady in the series, and this transition from the last of the three ladies to a star is an allegory for the human subject's crossing the threshold from imagination (which is mortal) to intellection (which is immortal):

> This last lady/form [i.e., Lady 3] is precisely that of the imagination. The passage from the imagination to the intellect is compared to the emergence of a star. From the *species ymaginata* [i.e., Lady 3] to the *species intellecta* [i.e., the star] there is a genuine metamorphosis from the sensible to the intelligible.[39]

This would be a rare case in which Cavalcanti entertains the hope that there might be, for humans, a passage from imagination to Intellect[40]—i.e., that we can become Intellect and thus that there might be the possibility of salvation (*salute*) as conceived (if not necessarily affirmed) by al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, Averroes, Maimonides, and others.

Gagliardi's reading stems from his interpreting line 11 to mean "from whom a star seems to come." This rendering of this ambiguous verse makes his reading problematic. Unable to account for the disparity between the series of three *species* and the four phases which he sees expressed in the poem, he is forced to offer an inelegant scheme: Lady 1 as *species sensata* → Lady 3 as *species imaginata* → Star as *species intellecta*.[41] Gagliardi takes the crucial line 11 (*da la qual par ch'una stella si mova*) to mean "from which a star seems to emerge," which is indeed possible grammatically. But it is also possible to take the verse to mean "by which a star seems to be moved."[42] In my view this latter reading makes more sense philosophically. In Gagliardi's interpretation, the star, which emerges from the third and last lady, is itself the fourth and last element and, as a metaphysical entity, the ontological high point of the series, ranking above the three ladies.[43] But if the verse means "by which a star seems to be moved," then the third and last lady (who is the star's mover) ranks above the star (given the Aristotelian principle that a mover is more noble than the object which it moves) and is herself the metaphysical high point of the series. Gagliardi, who takes the star to be Guido's poetic figure for the Intellect (i.e., the Active Intellect, one of the metaphysical Intelligences), overlooks a basic fact of Arabo-Aristotelian cosmology: stars are not Intelligences; rather, they are animate material beings (the union of celestial soul and celestial body) moved by the celestial soul's desire to become a purely immaterial Intelligence.[44] In short, stars (and the

celestial spheres and planets in general) are *moved by* Intelligences. The third and highest lady (Lady 3) is not the *species imaginata* (as Gagliardi says she is); she is an *Intelligence* (the Active Intellect) *moving a star*, as the poem clearly states: "another [lady] is born, by which a star seems to be moved" (lines 10–11); and thus *she*, not the star, is the ontological high point of the series and the only entity that could possibly be the agent of the lover's salvation. There is no disparity between the three-stage scheme of abstraction and its representation by three ladies in the ballad: Lady 1 as *species sensata* → Lady 2 as *species imaginata* → Lady 3 as *species intellecta*.

We can definitively rule out the notion that the star, not Lady 3, is the ontologically noblest figure of this series. Clearly, it is the star who speaks the message proclaimed in line 12: *La salute tua è apparita* ("Your salvation has appeared"); the subjunctive mood of the verb, line 12's *dica*, leaves no room for entertaining the thought that Lady 3 speaks these words. And just as clearly, the star is indicating and directing the lover's attention toward Lady 3, she who is (or, who *would be*, if such were possible) the lover's salvation. If the star itself were the ontological high point (whether we conceive of that high point as intelligible form [*species intellecta*] or as the Active Intellect), the star would surely say, "I am your salvation." Moreover, the star *is moved* (*si mova*, line 11). Yet the Active Intellect is a *mover*, not moved.[45] And, we should add, the star performs a discursive function (using speech/*logos*) and is in communication with the lover, telling him about the Lady who is his salvation; here the star fulfills the role that Guido often assigns to Love: as an intermediary between the lover and pure Intelligence/Intellect. It is probably no coincidence that, in a passage from *Convivio* that we discussed near the end of Part One, Dante says that the "star" [*stella*] of philosophers such as Boethius and Cicero is "their writing [*scrittura*] about that [Lady]" and that "in every science the written word [*scrittura*] is a star [*stella*] filled with light which demonstrates that science." The lover can have meaningful communication with *logos*/*ratio* (the star), but that *logos* is an intermediary that tells the Lover that his Lady is elsewhere, distant and somewhere higher than the locus of language—somewhere higher than the image produced by the human soul.

Cavalcanti's ballad maps out the trajectory of intellection in three stages: the lady as she exists in Guido's sense-perception; the lady as a phantasm in his imagination; and the lady as *known* (intellected) as a pure intelligible form by the Possible/Active Intellect. Guido is himself the subject of the first two stages (i.e., he is the one who senses and imagines). The Active/Possible Intellect and the third Lady as *species intellecta*—which are one and the same in the act of Intellection—are the subject of the third stage (i.e., it is they, not Guido, who know and

understand). Cavalcanti's faculties (sense-perception and imagination) are mortal, and he is alienated from the immortality of Intellection. The poem is not an optimistic exception to the dark pessimism that pervades Cavalcanti's poetry. On the contrary, the star (a deeply ironic allusion to the Star of Bethlehem) is a messenger who relays to Guido that the latter is alienated from his salvation (*salute*; line 12)—that his salvation is up there awaiting, but that it is not for him. What is "saved" in this poem is Guido's thought of his lady; but unfortunately for him that thought is not *his* and its birth as an eternal reality does not confer eternality on Guido's imagination, which is generable and corruptible.

If Lady 2, the phantasm, is such that "the mind [*mente*] cannot understand her" (lines 8–9), this is because, in the Averroist view, we do not understand phantasms (images); rather, we provide them for the Possible Intellect to understand:

> The term *mente* acquires a unique and significant meaning [in Cavalcanti's lyric corpus], assuming an exceptionally important role in the representation of the amorous process. The *mente* is the locus of the cognitive process of abstraction, the elaboration and preservation of the amorous *phantasma* [image], which, as is specified in *Donna me prega*, resides in the *memoria* . . . , a faculty of the sensitive [i.e., imaginative] soul which operates in the last of the three "chambers" of the brain and is responsible for the preservation of sensible knowledge. The failure of the attempt to sustain and complete the mental process of the abstraction of the *phantasma* of the lady leads to the recognition of the inadequacy of the [human] faculty of intellection itself.[46]

Cavalcanti uses *mente* as a term for the human mind, a power of the imaginative soul not of the Intellect. And thus it goes almost without saying that the *mente* cannot understand the phantasm [lady 2], because *mente*'s role is not to understand but to produce and preserve images and to compose them in meaningful ways.

According to the Aristotelian principle that "like is known by like" (i.e., that a knower can only know that which is like itself), when the beautiful lady's form is known by the Possible Intellect, it is known as something *like* that Intellect—i.e., as a pure intelligible form. And, according to the related Aristotelian principle that the knower and the known are identical, when the lady's fully abstracted form is known by the Possible Intellect, it becomes identical with that Intellect. This identity is the Conjunction, the "salvation" of that form, which assumes its ontological status as superlunary, eternal, and immaterial. If Guido, in turn, were to know the lady (i.e., to know the intelligible form), the same principles would apply: he would become like the

lady and identical with the Active/Possible Intellect. And this would be Guido's salvation—a message that the star, referring to Lady 3, delivers: "Your salvation [*salute*] has appeared" (line 12). This scene of salvation announced by a star has been taken by some readers as an allusion to the star that appeared to the Magi and announced humankind's salvation through Christ. But the salvation presented in this poem is the salvation of the intelligible form: the Conjunction confers eternality on the intelligible form, while the lover's highest hope is for a quasi-conjunction, a connection in which what he has to offer and to receive remains on level of imagination—the level of the generable and corruptible.

Although Gagliardi has a good understanding of the philosophical context of the ballad, he is among those readers who—wrongly, in my view—see the poem as offering to humans the promise of an ascent, or indeed a quasi-religious ascension, to the realm of the superlunary. For Gagliardi, this is an ascent of the optimist Averroist variety—a reading for which he finds support in lines 19–20: "Look; if you gaze [*miri*] on that one/You will see her power [*vertù*] gone up to heaven." Rightly taking the verb, *mirare*, to mean contemplation (*speculatio*, *theoria*), Gagliardi draws the unjustified conclusion that these lines show Cavalcanti admitting for humans the possibility of "a vision that guarantees ascent to the heavens."[47] For only such an ascent, Gagliardi says, would allow Guido to contemplate the Lady's (i.e., the Active Intellect's) power:

> In order to see her proper faculty (*virtus*) ascended into heaven, it is necessary that he who looks at her also ascend to heaven. The mutual ascent of the intellect (of man) and the *virtus* of this lady is the ultimate *copulatio* [i.e., Conjunction] between the [P]ossible [I]ntellect and the Active Intellect.[48]

This may be in keeping with a certain strand of Averroism, but it is not what Cavalcanti's ballad says: in the poem, Guido remains firmly planted on the earth, alienated from the locus of his salvation. But Gagliardi sees this ballad and one or two other poems as forming a small group in which Cavalcanti, departing from his usual stance of despair, expresses hope: "There is a new and miraculous event, different from the normal situation of desperation for a hopeless love. . . . The entire emotional situation is no longer tragic."[49]

What is overlooked by those many commentators who see in this poem Cavalcanti's hope for our ascension is that this salutary vision, this event of *theoria*, does not happen. More precisely, it happens to Guido—in his imagination—but it cannot be expressed to the intellect: "Something happens to me when I am in her presence/that I cannot express to the Intellect [*a lo 'ntelletto*]" (lines 5–6). If the event of Guido's salvation

cannot be expressed to the intellect, this is because it is a personal, subjective fantasy, not an objective reality: the Intellect only knows what is universal and objectively real. What is represented in the ballad is not Intellection but Guido's fantasy—a phantasm or image—of Intellection: he imagines that his salvation has appeared. Guido is not one who sees but rather one who seems to see ("I seem to see"; line 7); and, again, he is sentient (*sento*, "I feel"; line 17) but not intellecting. Moreover, even if Guido's vision as represented in this poem did take place on the level of intellection rather than imagination, what he sees is not the vision granted by the Conjunction but rather a disjunction between his human *vertù* (power or faculty of soul) and the divine *vertù* of the Lady—the disjunction between the sensitive and the Intellective powers. The message disclosed to Guido in the closing lines tells him that the Intellective power is located in the superlunary not the sublunary realm: "Look; if you gaze on that one/you will see her power [*vertù*] gone up [*salita*] to heaven." The intelligible form of the flesh-and-blood lady has (to use, once again, al-Farabi's phrase for the elevation of the ontological status of a natural entity once it has been intellected) "become one of the beings." As Gessani says, the effect of these lines—and particularly of the past participle *salita* ("gone up")—is to insist on the gap between human and divine powers:

> The 'power' ['*vertù*'] is in heaven, not here. If he had said that her power 'goes up to heaven' [*sale in cielo*], Cavalcanti would have been suggesting a fruitful and significant movement between heaven and earth; however, with the past participle, any possibility of such movement, any dialectic between heaven and earth, is definitively closed. . . . The value of the lady has gone entirely to heaven—and has done so while the lady [i.e., the real-life, flesh-and-blood lady] is alive; nothing [i.e., no *virtus* or faculty of intellection] remains in the world, and we can perhaps not reach heaven. The ecstasy of *Veggio negli occhi* is a false ecstasy.[50]

Thus *Veggio negli occhi* is not an aberration in Cavalcanti's corpus, not an optimistic celebration of the possibility of the Conjunction, but rather is consistent with the radically negative Averroism that we find elsewhere in his work. The poem amounts to an insistence on the impossibility of salvation—an impossibility that follows from the fact that the human soul does not possess intellect in the proper sense of the term. Humans play an indispensable role in the process of intellection by providing images that are illuminated by the Active Intellect for the benefit of the Possible Intellect. But this illumination, which would be our salvation, transpires (eternally) "up there," *nel ciel* ("in heaven"; line 20), while we are left down here longing for an event and a status from which we have been excluded.

Notes

1 In her outstanding book *L'ombra di Cavalcanti e Dante* (Rome: L'Asino d'oro, 2010) Noemi Ghetti recognizes that already with this ballad Cavalcanti is writing lyric that is primarily philosophical. Ghetti's brief discussion of the poem (96–97) emphasizes that Guido is here inventing a poetic and human metaphysics that does not seek transcendence in a Christian or Platonic sense:

> For the nonbelieving Guido, inventing a new verbal thinking to speak of that reality made up of images and affects called 'love' means to take on an inquiry into the degree to which the *metà tà physiká*—which is 'beyond nature' in a material sense ['*oltra natura*' *materiale*] and thus imperceptible to the physical senses—is nonetheless human. *It means thinking the invisible without falling back into the spiritual* [i.e, the transcendent; emphasis added].

2 Gianfranco Contini (*Poeti del Duecento* [Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1960], 160) says that the poem's flavor and language are "still very close to the Sicilians and to that poet among the Tuscans who represents the real bridge between the Sicilians and the Sweet New Style, Bonagiunta [da Lucca]." *R/I* (43), although recognizing the poem as a "prelude" to later developments in Cavalcanti's corpus, insists that its praise of the lady "does not depart from the themes and the language of the troubadour and Sicilian tradition." Ciccuto (Cavalcanti, *Rime*, 67) remarks that while Cavalcanti "here appears still bound to the Sicilian taste for naturalistic comparisons," the poem also foreshadows some later themes such as the lover's cognitive incapacity and the encounter between what he calls the level of the real (I take this to mean nature) and the level of the metaphysical.

3 Trans. (slightly modified) Nelson, *The Poetry*, 3, 5.

4 *In un boschetto trova' pasturella* (XLVI), a poem belonging to a genre, the *pastorella*, which in effect demands a sexual element (usually as a pornographic fantasy of male power), is clearly an exception to this rule.

5 Ghetti (*L'ombra*, 97) remarks that in Cavalcanti the "metaphor of the lady-angel inaugurated by the Sicilians" becomes "the literal angelification [*angelicazione*] of the lady, who is stripped . . . of any corporeal dimensions and spiritualized to the point of becoming an abstract symbol, the mediation between man and God."

6 See, for example, Avicenna, *Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 10.1 (trans. Marmura, 362), where "providence" means the metaphysical (i.e., divine) cause of the order of the Cosmos, including the natural order:

> Contemplate the state of the usefulness of the organs in animals and plants and how each has been created. There is for this no natural cause at all, but its principle is necessarily [divine] providence in the way you know. . . . For they are dependent on providence in the way you have known providence to attach to these.

The order of reality, with its hierarchy of essences, is providential, and so Cavalcanti's only hope for a change in essence would be a change granted by Providence.

7 For *costumanza*, the Tesoro della Lingua Italiana delle Origini (TLIO) illustrates the meaning "moral conduct" with the following remark from Brunetto Latini's *Rettorica* (ca. 1260–1261):

> e in ciò che dice 'queti studi,' intendo le altre scienze di filosofia, sì come trattare le nature delle divine cose e le terrene, e sì come l'etica, che tratta

> le virtudi e le costumanze" ("and where it says 'these studies,' I mean by that the other sciences of philosophy, such as those that treat the natures of divine things [i.e., metaphysics] and earthy things [i.e., physics] and such as ethics, which treats virtues and *customs* [*costumanze*]").
>
> (http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/TLIO/)

8 *Vita nuova* 24.3–4 (*Nuova edizione*, 203–204):

> Shortly after my heart had said these words, speaking with the tongue of Love, I saw coming toward me a gentlewoman, noted for her beauty, who had been the much-loved lady of my best friend [i.e., Guido Cavalcanti]. Her name was Giovanna, but because of her beauty (as many believed) she had been given the name of Primavera, meaning Spring, and so she came to be called. And, looking behind her, I saw coming the miraculous Beatrice. . . . These ladies passed close by me, one of them following the other, and it seemed that Love spoke in my heart and said: "The one in front is called Primavera only because of the way she comes today; for I inspired the giver of her name to call her Primavera, meaning 'she will come first' [*prima verrà*] on the day that Beatrice shows herself after the dream of her faithful one. And if you will also consider her real name, you will see that this too means 'she will come first,' since the name Joan [*Giovanna*] comes from the name of that John [*Giovanni*] who preceded the True Light, saying: *Ego vox clamantis in deserto: parate viam Domini*."

9 *Convivio* 3.11.17–18 (224). Dante explains that his lady is Metaphysics, which is called First Philosophy:

> Metaphysics, which is called the First Philosophy because Philosophy fixes her gaze on it out of the greatest necessity and with the greatest fervor. . . . Since we have seen what the primary and true [*primaia e vera*] Philosophy is in her very essence—which is the Lady of whom I speak—and how her noble name has by custom been extended to encompass the sciences, I will proceed with her praises [emphasis added].

10 Inglese (*L'intelletto*, 9) claims, without (as far as I can tell) any evidence in the text, that Cavalcanti indicates his own exclusive status and distinguishes between himself and everyone else: "Everyone *contemplates* (*mira*) but only the poet *sees* the miracle of beauty, inexpressible as such but perceptible through its effect: the vibration of the air caused by the intensity of light."

11 See *DeR*, 16.

12 *DeR* (16) calls the sonnet a "proclamation of unknowability and ineffability, without question in terms of negative theology." *R/I* (56) remarks that the poem is "sustained by a relentless sequence of negative expressions (6: *nol savria*; 9: *non si poria*; 12: *non fu*; 13: *non si pose*) that finishes with a disconcerting denunciation of the inherent limits of the human mind."

13 See *DeR*, 17.

14 As Gagliardi (*La donna mia*, 178) maintains in one of his many insightful treatments of the presence of Arabic philosophy in Cavalcanti's poetry.

15 Ciccuto (Cavalcanti, *Rime*, 75) correctly identifies the lady here as a "metaphysical object" who informs all (sublunar) reality. Another of Cavalcanti's earliest poems, *Avete 'n vo' li fior' e la verdura*, presents the Lady in terms that strongly suggest her identification as the Active Intellect:

> Avete 'n vo' li fior' e la verdura
> e ciò che luce ed è bello a vedere;

risplende più che sol vostra figura:
chi vo' non vede, ma' non pò valere.
In questo mondo non ha creatura
sì piena di bieltà né di piacere;
e chi d'amor si teme, lu' assicura
vostro bel vis' a tanto 'n sé volere.

(II, 1–8)

(You have in you ['*n vo*'] the flowers and the greenery and what shines and is beautiful to see; your face shines more than the sun: whoever does not see you can never have value/merit [*valore*]. In this world there is no creature so full of beauty or of pleasure; and he who fears love is reassured by your beautiful face to desire [to have] so much within himself ['*n sé*].)

Tellingly, lines 5–6 do not say that there is no *other* creature in this world of such beauty, for the Lady is not of this world: she is separate from all creatures of the world, from all physical entities. This Lady is the Active Intellect/Possible Intellect—in other words, not the intelligible form of such-and-such a thing, but the sum total or collection of *all* intelligible forms of physical things. Recall that for Avicenna the human intellect cannot ever serve as the substrate or treasury of intelligible forms; they are always located in the Active Intellect. For Averroes, too, no part of the human being can ever serve as the substrate for intelligible forms; rather, they are always located in the Possible Intellect. For Averroes, Possible (often called Material—a term that I do not use, since it might be confused with physical matter) and Active Intellect are distinct, but only as two components, so to speak, of the same eternal separate substance: the Possible as potential (analogous to matter in the physical world), the Active as that which makes that potential actual (analogous to form in the physical world); for this reason I sometimes refer to this twofold substance as the Active/Possible Intellect. Reading the Lady as the Active/Possible Intellect clarifies the rather bizarre opening couplet, which says that the flowers, the greenery, and what shines and is beautiful to see are *in* the Lady, that she has them in her. The little word *'n* (*'n vo'*; line 1)—repeated consequentially in line 8 (*'n sé*)—carries a lot of weight. What the Lady "has" of natural entities is not any trace of their physical matter but rather their intelligible forms—i.e., that which *luce ed è bello a vedere* ("shines and is beautiful to see"; line 2). The Active/Possible Intellect is both the cause and the receptacle of the intelligible forms of all sublunary, natural entities. The first couplet is a quite precise characterization of the Active Intellect: it has *in itself* (as Possible Intellect, the substrate and receptacle of the intelligible forms of all natural entities) "what is beautiful to see" (line 2), but also it *is* itself (as Active Intellect) that which illuminates those forms ("that which shines"; line 2), making them eternally actual in the Possible Intellect. In this sonnet the Lover does not desire to see or touch the Lady, nor does he want a relation with her. Rather, he desires (*volere*; line 8) to have *in himself* (*'n sé*; line 8) what is *in the Lady* (*'n vo'*; line 1): he wants to become, through the Conjunction, the Active Intellect.

16 Nelson translates *umiltà* as "good will" and *ira* as "vexation." Marc Cirigliano (Guido Cavalcanti, *The Complete Poems* [New York, Italica Press, 1992], 11) translates these verses as "she seems of such humility/that others compared to her seem Furies"—a decent enough rendering of the surface meaning, but by eliminating anger/*ira* it occludes recognition that what is in play here is the Aristotelian discourse on affects of the soul.

17 *DA* 403a3–403b19. Throughout this study, the Latin in square brackets in quotations of Aristotle and Averroes is taken from a late medieval Latin translation of the work in question. In the case of Aristotle's *De anima*, the Latin is from Averrois Cordubensis, *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima Libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953).

18 This *ira* (anger) is not to be confused with irascible desire, a notion that will be one of the cornerstones of our demonstration (Part Five) that the love discussed in *Donna me prega* is quintessentially rational.

19 Glossing lines 7–8, Ciccuto (*Il restauro*, 30) remarks that *umiltà* in the Duecento can mean "tranquillità di affetti" (tranquility of affect)—the opposite of passion.

20 *R/I* (123) takes line 8's *essendoti presente* ("you being present") to mean "when I am in your presence," claiming that the Lady is present with the lover and that this prevents Love from shooting the third arrow. There is nothing in the sonnet to support this reading. Since the whole poem insists on disjunction and layers of mediation—after all, it is the lover's "spirit that comes from afar" (line 3), not the lover himself, who addresses the Lady—it is unlikely that we should take the lover to be in her immediate presence. It is Love and the arrow that are with the Lady, as indicated by the fact that she contains/bears/carries (*porti*; line 1) Love in her eyes.

21 Thomas Aquinas, "Disputed Question on the Cardinal Virtues," in R.E. Houser, *The Cardinal Virtues: Aquinas, Albert, and Philip the Chancellor* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004), 163; emphases added.

22 It is intriguing to note that in *Paradiso* Dante uses the metaphor of three arrows precisely in the context of the divine/metaphysical world's endowing created entities with form and matter—an endowing that is enumerated with a triadic scheme: "Forma e materia,/congiunte e purette,/usciro ad esser che non avia fallo,/come d'arco tricordo tre saette" ["Form and matter, conjoined and separate,/came into being without defect,/shot like three arrows from a three-stringed bow"] (*Par.* 29.22–24). The three arrows are the three types of created beings: pure form, pure matter, and entities composed of form and matter. In Cavalcanti's sonnet, it is the arrow of pure form that fails to strike humans.

23 For various senses of *pietà* in Cavalcanti's lexicon, including that of "suffering," see Rea, *Cavalcanti poeta*, 393–402.

24 As *R/I* points out (80), line 22's *dimostro* is the past participle, abbreviated.

25 *R/I* (80), contaminated by what is itself a questionable reading of Dante's aim in *Purgatory* 24.53–54 and suggesting that *libri d'Amore* here has nothing to do with actual books, claims that with this phrase Cavalcanti is professing "the authenticity of the narrated event [i.e., of Guido's love relationship] and thus of his own feeling[s]." Although the claim to love sincerely goes back at least to the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn, there is no reason to think that Cavalcanti would want to make such a claim here. It makes much more sense to take him literally: he avows that he composes love poetry through book learning. In Cavalcanti's beautiful sonnet *Biltà di donna e di saccente core*, we can catch a glimpse of his poetic practice as a copying from the books of philosophy:

> Biltà di donna e di saccente core
> e cavalieri armati che sien genti;
> cantar d'augelli e ragionar d'amore;
> 4 adorni legni 'n mar forte correnti;
> aire serena quand' apar l'albore

e bianca neve scender senza venti;
rivera d'aigua e prato d'ogni fiore;
oro, argento, azzuro 'n ornamenti:
ciò passa la beltate e la piagenza
de la mia donna e 'l su' gentil coraggio,
sì che rasembra vile a chi ciò sguarda;
e tanto più d'ogni altr' ha canoscenza.
quanto lo cielo della terra è maggio.
A simil di natura ben non tarda.

(III)

(Woman's beauty and sage's heart and knights in armor that are noble; singing of birds and discoursing of love; embellished ships sailing swiftly on the sea; clear air when the dawn appears and white snow falling with no winds; watered bank and meadow with every flower; gold, silver, or azure in adornments: The beauty and the pleasure of my lady and her noble heart surpass all that, so that it all appears worthless [*vile*] to one who looks on it; and more than any other she has knowledge [*canoscenza*] to the extent that [*quanto*] heaven is greater than [*maggio*] earth. To one of such nature, goodness does not delay.) Trans. (slightly modified) Nelson (Cavalcanti), *The Poetry*, 7.

This sonnet contains some of the poet's most richly embellished and colorfully descriptive verses. But all this wealth of charming imagery is confined to the two quatrains, precisely because these do not refer to the lady. She herself is simply—in a language of generality lacking indicators of concrete qualities—proclaimed to be beautiful, worthy, noble, and knowledgeable. There is a marked contrast between the materiality of the quatrains, which treat our human and physical world, and the abstract universality of the two tercets, which treat the lady in metaphysical terms—almost as if the poem yokes together two diametrically opposed styles of discourse. This poem is Cavalcanti's contribution to the genre known in Occitan as the *plazer* ("pleasure")—although his purpose is to take that genre in an unprecedented direction. The quatrains, in their rhetorical form, adhere to the rule of the Occitan *plazer* (an enumeration of delightful items), but their content is less typical. Usually, the *plazer* is a list of those things that please the poet ("I like this" and "I like that"), and the poet typically presents a wish-list of imagined material pleasures (riches, leisurely recreation, fine dining, furs, etc.), sometimes in a comic vein. Here, in the quatrains, Guido effaces his own subjectivity entirely: there is no trace of his personal appetite, and the poem does not tell us what pleases *him* but simply and objectively portrays a collection of some of the most noble, beautiful, and pleasant scenes that the world has to offer. But the deviation from the ordinary *plazer* does not lie in this dignified refinement—as if Cavalcanti's point were simply to contrast his own selfless and non-appetitive aristocratic taste from the vile physical drives of the vulgar. For, in the light of what is presented in the two tercets, even these noble pleasures turn out to be lowly ones. What is wholly new is the shift that happens between the quatrains and the tercets. All the pleasures enumerated in the first eight lines turn out *not* to be the pleasure celebrated by this *plazer*: the pleasure of Intellect. The point of the sonnet is not to contrast noble human pleasures with vulgar human pleasures but rather to contrast the pleasure of true nobility—which is not of our world—with all human pleasures: the best of human life and of the physical world is *vile* in comparison with the lady's *canoscenza* ("knowledge"; line 12).

Cavalcanti very likely has in mind a passage such as the following from *De summo bono* by Boethius of Dacia, a leader of the Averroist movement in Paris in the 1270s:

> Now the highest good that is possible to man, in relation to his faculty of speculative intellect, is knowledge [*cognitio*] of the true and *pleasure* taken in it. For knowledge of the true is *pleasurable*. The thing known, in fact, *pleases* the one who knows it: to the extent that [*quanto*] the thing known is more wonderful [*magis mirabile*] and more noble [*magis nobile*], and the more the intellect that knows it demonstrates greater power in knowing it perfectly, the greater is the *pleasure* of the intellect. For whoever has tasted such *pleasure* spurns all other *pleasures* as [merely] sensory, for in truth they are lesser and lowlier [*vilior*]. And the man who chooses the latter [i.e., sensory pleasures] is himself lowlier [*vilior*] than he who chooses the former [i.e., intellectual pleasures].
>
> Boethius of Dacia, *De summo bono*, https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/boethiusdacia/desummobono.html

The lexicon of Guido's tercets—the *vile* of line 11 and the *quanto* and *maggio* of line 13—precisely matches Boethius of Dacia's *vilior*, *quanto*, and *magis* in both letter and spirit—suggesting a direct connection between the poem and the treatise. At any rate, the sonnet amounts to a rendition into poetic language of *De summo bono*: the highest *plazer* is *canoscenza* or *cognitio*, the pleasure of intellection. That the Lady is a metaphysical Intelligence is indicated by the poem's last verse: "To one of such nature, goodness does not delay." The good is a thing's perfection, the undividedness of its potency and act, its complete actuality. Humans have the potential to attain the human good, but this requires the development of that potential over time, through the work of thinking. The Active Intellect, on the other hand, is immediately pure act, with no trace of potential: there is no delay between its coming to exist and its attainment of perfection.

26 Thus *R/I* (81) glosses the verse to mean "I do not dare dwell in the intellective act of conceptualizing [the Lady]."

27 No one sees such a thing, because Love gives the lover a spiritual form located in the lover's sensitive-imaginative soul.

28 Ibn Bajja's *Conjunction of the Intellect with Man* includes his very interesting revision of Plato's Allegory of the Cave. For Ibn Bajja, the allegory distinguishes between three kinds—which he repeatedly calls *states* or *ranks*—of humans: first, the masses, who remain in the cave and do not ever directly see light but only shadows and colors; second, the "theorists" (by which he means physicists or natural scientists), who step out of the cave and are able to see light directly as well as the true nature of colors; third, the "happy"—metaphysicians who have attained the Conjunction. Ibn Bajja finds fault with Plato's allegory because it does not properly represent the state of the happy; they are not simply able to see the Sun (as in Plato) but rather actually to *become* the Sun itself:

> There is no equivalent in [Plato's allegory] of seeing for the happy [i.e., of metaphysicians who have attained the Conjunction], since they themselves become the thing [i.e., become the Intellect]. So, if sight were to alter and then become light, then at that moment, it would arrive at the stage of happiness.
>
> Ibn Bagga (Avempace), *La conduit*e, 198

In Ibn Bajja's allegory, the colors are individual entities in the natural world. The masses regard them precisely as that—just as particular things. They give no thought as to the true nature of these things. The "theorists" or natural philosophers do give thought to these things: they are able to see the light, which means that they are able to abstract the universal intelligible form of a natural thing and retain that form in their sensitive (i.e., imaginative) soul. The perfected metaphysician, having become one with the Sun (i.e. the Active Intellect) itself, no longer sees or looks at the Sun, since viewing or vision (*theoria*) implies a distance between and non-identity of the viewer and the object viewed. Following his revision of Plato's allegory, Ibn Bajja asserts that the first two ranks of humans (the masses and the theorists) will "pass away," while only the happy will in some sense "neither pass away nor corrupt." In *The Governance of the Solitary*, Ibn Bajja speaks as though the philosopher can ultimately become a "pure divinity":

> The man of wisdom . . . stands alone as the one who performs the most excellent and noblest of actions. When he achieves the final end—that is, when he understands simple essential intellects, which are mentioned [by Aristotle] in the *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul*, and *On Sense and the Sensible*—he then becomes one of those intellects. It would be right to call him simply divine. He will be free from the moral sensible qualities, as well as from the *high particular spiritual qualities*: it will be fitting to describe him as a pure divinity.
>
> Quoted in *LC*, xxvi

Cavalcanti is convinced that we can never free ourselves from the "high particular spiritual qualities"—i.e., from spiritual forms that are to some degree imaginative: our highest attainment is to become a scientist (one who will pass away), and we cannot become the Sun.

29 Much of Ibn Bajja's *The Governance of the Solitary* involves his identifying the various levels of humans, graded on a scale of ethical worth, with the kind of spiritual forms with which they primarily concern themselves. For Ibn Bajja, there are four kinds of spiritual form. The first three are called particular spiritual forms because they are not fully abstracted pure universals: the object of the common sense; the object of imagination; the object of memory. The fourth is called the general spiritual form and, as a pure intelligible form, is the object of intellect. See Charles Genequand's masterful account in Ibn Bagga, (Avempace), *La conduite de l'isolé et deux autres épîtres*, trans. Charles Genequand (Paris: J. Vrin, 2010), 23–36. When Cavalcanti is talking about *spirito* as he does here in this poem, this should not be confused with the pneumatic "spirits" which he frequently mentions elsewhere; these latter, breathlike ethereal physical infusions, "vital spirits" which quicken the body and circulate as necessary energy for its various operations, are (as Genequand points out [23]) fundamentally different from spiritual forms and are rooted in a different philosophical and scientific tradition. Cavalcanti's notion of the pneumatic vital spirits is based on a physiological tradition best exemplified by Ibn Luqa's *On the Difference Between Spirit and the Soul*, which was translated into Latin in the first part of the twelfth century; for the Latin text and English translation, see Judith Carol Wilcox, "The Transmission and Influence of Qusta Ibn Luqa's 'On the Difference Between Spirit and the Soul'" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1985).

30 *The Political Regime*, 83–84, 82; emphases added.

31 Ibid., 84; emphasis added.

32 Giuliano Tanturli ("La terza canzone del Cavalcanti: 'Poi che di doglia cor conven ch'i' porti'," *Studi di filologia italiana* 42 [1984], 24–25) reads this canzone as an assertation that purely disinterested love (love that aims for nothing other than itself) is ineffable and when "figured, dies" (line 8); that is, such love cannot be represented for others, whether through signs legible in the lover's somatic appearance or as poetry. Enrico Fenzi ("Interpretazioni cavalcantiane," in *Guido Cavalcanti laico e le origini della poesía europea*, ed. Rossend Arqués [Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004], 124–127) challenges Tanturli's interpretation, proposing instead (while admitting that the poem's "meaning is not at all clear" and that in such texts "anyone can find what one is looking for") that the poem's point is that Cavalcanti's love is a pathological condition that compels him obsessively to take pleasure in a phantasm, a mental image of the beloved object, even though that pleasure leads to death, understood primarily as the *io*'s alienation from the rational self and as the impossibility of autonomous self-control. Here as elsewhere Fenzi, one of the most philosophically informed Cavalcanti scholars, insists on the commonplace view according to which love for Cavalcanti is inescapable, irrational, and destructive.

33 *Convivio* 3.15.2 (242):

> You ought to know that her eyes [*li occhi*] . . . are her demonstrations [*le sue dimostrazioni*], with which one sees the truth [*si vede la veritade*; compare with lines 12–13 of Cavalcanti's sonnet: *lo vero . . . veder*] with great certainty.
>
> *Convivio* 2.15. 4 (140–141)

> O most sweet [*dolcissimi*] and ineffable looks [*sembianti*], sudden captors of the human mind [*umana mente*], who appear in the demonstrations [*dimostrazioni*], [i.e.,] in the eyes [*nelli occhi*] of Philosophy when she discourses [*ragiona*] with her lovers! Truly in you is salvation [*salute*], by which he who looks on you [*vi guarda*] is made blessed and is saved [*si salva*] from the death [*morte*] of ignorance and vice.

It would be hard to find a brief, two-sentence passage more replete with Cavalcantian vocabulary than this one.

34 *Convivio* 3.15.2 (242–243): "And the smile [*lo riso*] is her persuasions [*le sue persuasions*], in which the inner light of Wisdom is demonstrated beneath some veil [i.e., through rhetorical figuration]." Remarkably, the continuation of this passage (3.15.3; 243–244) brings together all three components of the Lady portrayed in Cavalcanti's sonnet: her eyes, her look, her smile, to declare that only through these can we acquire human perfection, the perfection of *ratio*: the pleasure of Paradise, here on earth, consists only

> in looking [*guardare*; see line 10: *quella donna mi degnò guardare*] in these eyes [*occhi*; see line 1: *li occhi*] and in this smile [*riso*; see line 5: *la donna rise*]. . . . And human perfection—that is, the perfection of reason [*ragione*]—is acquired only in this look [*sguardo*].

35 Strictly speaking, the poem presents three ladies and a star; since the star, as we will see, is often interpreted as the high point of this series and as a figure for the Active Intellect and/or the pure universal intelligible form, one can say (loosely speaking) that, for those who endorse that interpretation, the star is the fourth and noblest of the "ladies."

36 Nelson (Cavalcanti), *The Poetry*, 37: "From whom a star seems to come"; West (Cavalcanti), *The Selected Poetry*, 43: "out of which a star soon rises."

37 Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* 20c; quoted in Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 284; emphasis added.
38 Antonio Gagliardi, "*Species intelligibilis*," in *Guido Cavalcanti laico e le origini della poesia europea*, ed. Rossend Arqués (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004), 156.
39 Ibid.
40 Paolo Borsa, like Gagliardi, takes the star to be the intelligible form known by the human intellect in the act of intellection, and he too reads this poem as an optimistic exception to Cavalcanti's usual pessimism regarding the possibility of Conjunction:

> A third figure of a lady is born, characterized by a new and extraordinary *bellezza*, which is then presented for the contemplation of the intellect so that it might perform on [the third lady] its specific proper function. The process of apprehension and abstraction leads to, in the intellect, a luminous epiphany of powerful and salvific effects ("*salute*") on the subject; the 'star' seems to represent the final act of intellection, which Aristotelian doctrine presents as an act of the Active Intellect's illumination of the [human intellect]. Such an outcome is rare if not unique in Cavalcanti's poetry, in which passion . . . generally clouds the lover's mind, precluding the final intellection of the amorous phantasm. In [this poem], however, the outcome of the mental sequence may be interpreted as the successful process of the abstraction of the universal intelligible of 'beauty,' beginning with the contingent appearance of the 'beautiful lady,' whose image is denuded step by step, in the mind, of all accidental qualities.
>
> Borsa, "L'immagine nel cuore e l'immagine nella mente: dal Notaro alla *Vita nuova* attraverso i due Guidi," in *Les deux Guidi: Guinizelli et Cavalcanti (Mourir d'aimer et autres ruptures)* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2016), 83

Recall from our discussion in Part Three that, contrary to what Borsa suggests here, Averroes does *not* teach that the Active Intellect illuminates the human intellect; rather, he teaches that the Active Intellect enables the Possible Intellect to see the intelligible form that is there in the image produced by the human soul.
41 In a similar vein, *R/I* (144) takes the star to be a figure for the Active Intellect (and thus the agent of the lover's salvation), the luminous light of which activates intellection.
42 Noting the ambiguity of the verse, Gessani (*Dante, Guido*, 118) remarks that the star is "una luce che nasce o che è mossa dalla terza donna" ("a light that is born from or that is moved by the third lady").
43 Gagliardi, *La donna mia*, 163:

> The lady of *bellezza nuova* [line 10; i.e., Lady 3] is precisely her phantasm lodged in the imagination. . . . The lady [i.e., Lady 3] and the star are of opposite nature. While the former [i.e., Lady 3] retains her material character, her individuality, even in the imagination, *the star is a separate substance*, of an entirely intellectual or spiritual nature.
>
> Emphasis added

I am saying, instead, that Lady 3 is a separate substance.
44 See my "Dante as Celestial Soul."
45 More precisely, since only God is the Unmoved Mover: insofar as the Active Intellect is moved, this is by emanation from a higher Intelligence and

ultimately from God; yet Gagliardi would have us think that the star is moved by or emanates from something that is its ontological inferior.

46 Rea, *Cavalcanti poeta*, 338–339.

47 Gagliardi, "*Species*," 157.

48 Ibid., 157. I am translating "possible intellect" with lowercase initial letters here, since Gagliardi, in speaking of this *copulatio*, can only be referring to a union of a human's possible intellect and the Active Intellect. Although Aquinas maintains that humans have the *virtus* of possible intellect, Averroes denies this, and so Gagliardi's Averroist reading of the poem here takes a detour into Thomas's territory.

49 Ibid.

50 Gessani, *Dante, Guido* 121, 123.

Part Five
Long Commentary on *Donna me prega*

The tradition of commentary on *Donna me prega* presents a striking combination of profuse divergence and singular convergence. When it comes to the meaning of the canzone's details—a word or a phrase, whether on the literal level or on the level of significance—there is massive doubt and uncertainty, allowance for alternatives, etc. Inversely proportional to this divergence of detail, when it comes down to having to say what the poem is really saying, what the gist of its message is, there is absolute convergence and total certainty: Cavalcanti says that love is irrational.[1] If this were in fact the case, the poem would hold little interest for anyone other than the Dante scholar wishing to use Guido as a foil for Dante's higher conception of love.

I will approach *Donna me prega* with the presumption that the canzone is a coherent whole. If and when a global interpretation emerges and develops into substantial form, I will, when faced with a choice, interpret in favor of coherence. In doing so, I follow the method embraced by Averroes. Referring to Alexander of Aphrodisias's offering, as exegesis of a certain difficult passage in Aristotle, a miscellany of five different readings, Averroes says the following:

> If one thinks about [the meaning] very carefully, and about the exact implications of the words expressing it . . . , one will easily see that the words express this concept . . . more than [the multiplicity of concepts offered] by the man who interpreted this passage in five different ways . . . , since this interpretation conforming to the probable meaning of the words is one of the five.[2]

The interpretation of the canzone must be grounded in the exact implications of its words and ought to assume that Cavalcanti's composition is a unified work of poetic art.

Stanza 1

> Donna me prega, — per ch'eo voglio dire
> d'un accidente — che sovente — è fero

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3 ed è sì altero — ch'è chiamato "amore";
sì chi lo nega — possa 'l ver sentire!
Ed a presente — canoscente — chero,
6 perch'io no spero — ch'om di basso core
a tal ragione porti canoscenza:
ché senza — natural dimostramento
9 non ho talento — di voler provare
là dov'e' posa e chi lo fa creare
e qual sia sua vertute e sua potenza,
12 l'essenza — poi e ciascun suo movimento,
e 'l piacimento — che 'l fa dire "amare,"
e s'omo per veder lo pò mostrare.

(A lady bids me, and so I want to speak of an accident that is often fierce and is so noble that [it] is called "love" [*amore*]; may whoever denies it hear the truth! And for the present purpose I want someone who is knowledgeable, because I do not expect that anyone base-hearted would understand such discourse [*ragione*]: for I do not wish to prove, without natural demonstration, where it [i.e., love] resides, and who makes it exist, and what is its power [*vertute*] and its potency, then its essence and each of its movements, and the pleasure that makes it called "loving" [*amare*], and whether one can show it visually.)

Although in this Long Commentary we will ignore formal (technical) aspects of *Donna me prega*, we ought to mention the challenging structural framework that Cavalcanti designed and that qualifies the canzone as an artistic *tour de force*. Ironically, the poem is both Cavalcanti's least poetic (i.e., most resembling a philosophical treatise in prose) and most poetic (i.e., most formally intricate) production.

Stanza 1 is the first of five sonnet-length stanzas; these five are followed by a closing *congedo* of five lines, making the total number of verses seventy-five. The rhyme scheme of the stanzas is highly complex, particularly for its abundance of internal rhymes (designated in this scheme in parentheses and, following editorial convention, located in the text with em dashes): $(a_5)B(c_5)(c_4)D(d_5)E$, $(a_5)B(c_5)(c_4)D(d_5)E$; $F(f_3)G(g_5)HH$, $F(f_3)G(g_5)HH$.[3]

The poem opens by declaring that it is motivated by a request from "[a] lady" (*donna*) who has presumably asked Guido for his view concerning the question, "What is love?"[4] There is a disjunction between this initial indication of a courtly, vernacular discourse deemed (in the late Middle Ages) suitable for women and the actual discourse that follows—a highly technical, scientific treatise suitable only for those deeply familiar with the exclusively male and Latin domain of the universities. But the problem posed by this violation of verisimilitude fades when we bear in mind that Cavalcanti does not strive for narrative realism.

The canzone's first verb—*pregare* ("to ask," "to implore")—has been taken as key evidence of an intertextual dispute between *Donna me prega* and Dante's *Vita nuova*. Until recently, it had nearly always been assumed that *Vita nuova* was composed after Cavalcanti's canzone and is in part meant to stage Dante's surpassing the limitations of Guido's doctrine on love. This assumption stems from taking at face value Dante's apparent narration of his progression through and past his former adherence to Cavalcanti's poetics. In recent decades, this view has been turned on its head, as a dozen or more important studies have argued that *Donna me prega* is written as a reply to and critique of the (in Guido's eyes) overly celebratory view of love formulated in Dante's *libello*.[5] In this light, the canzone's opening words—"Donna me prega"—situate Guido's poem in an imaginary context similar to that of *Vita nuova*, in which dialogue between Dante and various ladies is frequently the starting point for the development of Dante's thoughts on love. In *Vita nuova* 18, for instance, a lady, speaking on behalf of a group of several ladies, bids or requests—she uses the verb *pregare*—Dante to clarify the aim of his love: "Noi ti *preghiamo* che tu ne dichi dove sta questa tua beatitudine" ("We bid you tell us where this beatitude of yours resides").[6] By opening the canzone with the bidding of a lady, Guido would be saying that it is now his turn to treat the questions that Dante had grappled with in his book. Alternately, those who reassert the view that *Vita nuova* was composed after and partly as a rebuttal of Guido's canzone can point to *Vita nuova* 20, where Dante says that a male friend ("alcuno amico") requested—again, the verb is *pregare*—that Dante tell him what love is: "volontà lo mosse a *pregar*mi ched io li dovessi dire che è Amore" ("his will moved him to bid me that I should tell him what Love is").[7] Given that Dante repeatedly refers to Guido as his *amico*, Dante's inside joke here would be this: Cavalcanti, even after having composed his instantly famous treatise on the subject, remains uncertain concerning "che è Amore" ("what Love is") and needs to turn to Dante for further education.[8]

Regardless of the chronology of composition, there is virtually unanimous critical consensus that the views on love presented in the two works diverge radically.[9] This dissension may be boiled down to a dispute over whether love is rational (controllable, positive, life-affirming) or irrational (uncontrollable, negative, death-dealing).[10] Cavalcanti in this scheme is seen as one who would thoroughly reject Dante's claim that love can be regulated by "'l fedel consiglio de la ragione" ("the trustworthy counsel of reason").[11] In this Long Commentary, we will show that this scheme is wrong—since one of *Donna me prega*'s fundamental claims is that loving is quintessentially rational. Yet we will need to defer the important and immensely difficult question concerning the Cavalcanti-Dante relation until after our treatment of Dante's *Comedy*. It would be hard to tell how the two poets differ if we have not yet accurately ascertained what each is saying.

Cavalcanti declares in lines 2–3 that love is an "accident." Love is not to be conceived of as a being or substance, as a subject (substrate) in its own right; rather, it is something that qualifies or inheres in something else that *is* a being, substance, or subject. For example, anger is an accident in a human being: minus the human being, the anger does not exist, although the human being may well exist without anger.[12] The accident called "love," inhering in a human being, does (sometimes) exist but does not and cannot exist separately from a human being. Characterizing love as an accident was not uncommon: one can point to examples from Scholastic philosophy, from the earliest Italian lyric poetry, and from *Vita nuova*.[13] As we will see below, love's accidentality is a fundamental premise guiding Cavalcanti's thinking throughout *Donna me prega*.[14]

For now, let us simply say that in Aristotelian psychology "accident" functions as a synonym for emotion or affect. One might say that accident is a synonym for passion—but Cavalcanti carefully and pointedly avoids using that term anywhere in the canzone.[15] Emphasizing that love is an accident, Guido avoids the unwanted connotations of passion—a term that suggests a subject's purely passive receiving, such that the subject, lacking agency, is subjected to the force of an external cause and turned into an object. Emotions or affects, on the other hand, involve the subject's a*ction* as well as passion.[16]

The most pertinent aspect of accidentality for *Donna me prega* is operation: the performing of an action.[17] Love, which is in fact (named with a verb form) *loving* ("the pleasure that makes it called 'loving' [*amare*]"; line 13), is an action: the activity deployed by a certain faculty of the soul when it is actually operating. This sense of the substance/accident distinction may be illustrated with a simple example. Socrates is a substance; Socrates's sitting is an accident: he may now be sitting but may be standing later. As we will see, for Cavalcanti love's accidentality involves the fact that although all humans possess the faculty that potentially loves, individual humans may or may not exercise that faculty habitually, and so loving is a quality that (to use the words of the Florentine physician Dino del Garbo [d. 1327], *Donna me prega*'s earliest and among its most able commentators) "may appear and disappear like any other accident."[18]

But it is not really love that Cavalcanti proposes to talk about. Rather, it is an "an accident . . . *called* 'love'" (lines 2–3; emphasis added). *Donna me prega* does not treat love pure and simple but rather treats something that people may refer to by the names "love" (*amore*; line 3) or "loving" (*amare*; line 13). Dino del Garbo's commentary picks up on this point, for he declares himself not interested in the name but rather in the thing treated—the name being an arbitrary designation for the accident in question.[19] Guido does not rule out the possibility that other things (either substances or accidents) exist that may also be called (either properly or arbitrarily) "love." "Love" is an appropriate term for the accident to be discussed, but this does not mean that the poem will discuss "what Love is" in a universal or absolute sense.[20] At the same time,

the accident in question may be called love but may in fact encompass more than the particular emotion customarily known as love: it may by extension be a name for the fundamental motivation of all emotions and, more than that, of all human *praxis*.[21] If love is shorthand for emotion, and if emotion cannot be separated from reason ("thinking, loving, and hating"—as we will see below—are for Averroes and Cavalcanti the proper characterization of the operation of *ratio* [i.e., practical reason]), then loving may well indicate the act of rational ethical choice.

The accident in question is *fero* and *altero* (lines 2–3). Both words have both negative and positive connotations in Duecento Italian. On the negative side, *fero* (derived from Latin *ferus* and/or *ferox*) can mean violent, ferocious, cruel, harsh, savage, uncultivated, merciless, while *altero* (from Latin *altus*) can mean prideful, disdainful, arrogant. On the positive side, *fero* can mean courageous, brave, unflinching, powerful, while *altero* can mean elevated, lofty, noble. Notable advocates for a positive sense of *altero* include three of Cavalcanti's most accomplished recent editors.[22] This reading of *altero* as noble accords with the gloss of the early Trecento commentator known as Pseudo-Egidius, who writes that Guido "says that [love] is the most noble and virtuous accident that there is in the soul."[23] Taking line 3 to mean "and it [the accident in question] is so noble that it is called 'love'" (in other words, that this accident's positive ethical worth is the reason that it merits this name of honor), Pseudo-Egidius suggests that love is a mode of desire distinct from and ethically superior to baser modes of desire—and this is in fact what we will show in this Long Commentary: loving is a noble (even heroic) emotional operation, not a deleterious passion.[24] Moreover, reading *altero* in this positive sense is consistent with what Guido says later in the canzone: that love is mostly found in people of worth (line 49). Since the adjectives *fero* and *altero* are working in consort, then the former ought to be read in a positive sense as well. Guido Guinizelli's famous canzone *Al cor gentil* (recall, as treated in Part One above, that Cavalcanti was the Bolognese's first great Tuscan champion) provides a decisive precedent: *fero* is unambiguously used to praise love's indomitably lofty nature.[25] We will have more to say about *fero* (in the sense of undaunted courage, as a positive spirited warlike disposition in the face of arduous hardship) below, as we piece together an interpretation of *Donna me prega*'s puzzling association of love with Mars.

For now we can settle on this reading of lines 1–3:

> Because a lady requests that I do so, I wish to speak about a motion of the soul that often is fierce[ly courageous] and is truly noble, that is called 'love' [or: "is so noble that it is called 'love'].

The canzone is meant for an audience that is "knowledgeable" (*canoscente*; line 5); it is not addressed to those who are vile or base (*di basso core*; line 6), since Guido does not expect (lines 6–7) that people of that sort would

possess the knowledge necessary to understand his discourse (*ragione*; line 7). That requisite knowledge is specified as philosophical, with the claim that the canzone will include *natural dimostramento* ("natural demonstration") as it proves its various assertions (lines 8–9). Equating nobility with philosophical education and excluding non-philosophers from his audience, Cavalcanti embraces two ethical tenets of the *falasifa*: that one's status as noble or base is a function of the degree of one's philosophical understanding; that philosophers should only share their knowledge with other philosophers. Demonstration—syllogistic reasoning that yields scientifically certain knowledge—is only possible in the realm of study that treats objects of *theoria*: physics, mathematics, and metaphysics. The human soul is such an object: in medieval enumerations of the sciences, psychology is classified as a field within physics (natural philosophy). Cavalcanti's discourse will be natural in the sense that it will be a discourse on an aspect of physics.[26] More generally, all philosophy (in distinction to, e.g., theology) is natural in the sense that it proceeds using first principles of which all humans are naturally certain in alliance with principles aligned with empirical observation of the natural world.

We should be careful, however, not to reduce *Donna me prega*'s scope to physics (or—even worse—to medicine[27]). Guido does not say that he will treat questions concerning love *exclusively* in the manner of natural philosophy; rather, he says that the canzone will not be "without" (*senza*; line 8)—not lacking in—that sort of philosophy. This declaration that the poem will be at least in part a demonstrative treatise in physics does not exclude its venturing to treat other things—things such as ethics (which belongs to practical [non-demonstrative, opinion-based] rather than to theoretical [i.e. scientific] philosophy) and metaphysics. As we will see, the canzone does not refrain from speaking of metaphysics and is, in the final analysis, ultimately concerned with ethics.

The rest of this stanza (lines 10–16) enumerates, in the manner of a Scholastic treatise, the eight questions—two for each of the canzone's remaining stanzas—that will be treated: **Stanza 2**: (a) where is the accident called "love" situated? (b) who generates it? **Stanza 3**: (a) what is its power (*vertute*)? (b) what is its potency (*potenza*)? **Stanza 4**: (a) what is its essence? (b) what are each of its movements? **Stanza 5**: (a) what sort of pleasure makes one call this accident "loving" (*amare*)? (b) whether love can be displayed visually. We will use this schema as the basis for the subdivisions of our Long Commentary.

Stanza 2

15 In quella parte — dove sta memora
prende suo stato, — sì formato, — come
diaffan da lume, — d'una scuritate
18 la qual da Marte — vène, e fa demora.
Elli è creato — da sensato; — nom'è

d'alma costume — e de cor volontate.
21 Vèn da veduta forma che s'intende,
che prende — nel possibile intelletto,
come in subietto, — loco e dimoranza;
24 in quella parte mai non ha possanza,
perché da qualitate non descende
(resplende — in sé perpetual effetto;
27 non ha diletto — ma consideranza);
sì che non pote là gir simiglianza.[28]

(In that part/place [*parte*] where memory exists [i.e., in the sensitive-imaginative soul], it [i.e., love] assumes its character—formed, like [the] diaphanous by light, by a darkness that comes from Mars—and it dwells [abides/remains; *fa demora*: "makes its home"] there. It is created from sensate [things]; it is a name for a habit of the soul and a will of the heart. It comes from a seen form that is intended [*da veduta forma che s'intende*], that [eventually] takes [its] place and residence in the Possible Intellect as in a substrate; in that place [i.e., in the Possible Intellect] it [i.e., the seen form that is intended] never has potential, since it [i.e., the Possible Intellect] does not originate from the principles of matter [*da qualitate*]: it [i.e., the Possible Intellect] shines in itself as perpetual effect; it [i.e., the Possible Intellect] does not have pleasure but [rather] *consideratio* [i.e., *theoria*], such that a similitude [*simiglianza*] cannot go there.)

Stanza 2 (a) Là dov'e' posa (lines 15–18)

The first part of Stanza 2, as announced in line 10, treats *là dov'e' posa* ("[the place] where it resides"). We learn that the accident called "love/loving" is located in the sensitive-imaginative soul: it assumes its character (*prende suo stato*) and "makes its home" (*fa demora*) in the part of the soul "where memory exists/stays/resides" (*dove sta memora*). Memory, as the very first notion that the canzone associates with love, carries abundant implications. It is an initial indication of the general assertion of this stanza as a whole: that there is an absolute ontological gap between the mortal operations of the human soul and the eternal intellection of the Possible Intellect. The link between love and memory as both exemplary of the materiality and mortality of the human soul points directly to a key passage in *DA* where Aristotle draws a distinction between "thinking, loving, and hating" (human operations) and intellect (as something "more divine"):

> Thinking, loving, and hating are not affections of [intellect], but of that which possesses it [i.e., of the whole human being], insofar as it possesses it. That is why when the latter [i.e., the human being] perishes, *it neither remembers nor loves*. For [thinking, loving, and

> hating] did not belong to [intellect], but to the common thing [i.e., to the body-soul composite], which was destroyed. But intellect is perhaps something more divine and impassible.[29]

In *LC*, Averroes sharpens this distinction into an absolute ontological difference between human "thinking, loving, and hating" and nonhuman Intellection—the former being inseparable from matter and mortal, the latter nonmaterial and immortal:

> Because these actions [i.e., thinking, loving, and hating] are in us by generable and corruptible powers different from the power which is the Possible Intellect, namely, that which understands universal intentions [*intentiones universales*: i.e., intelligible forms], no one can raise questions and say that if the [Possible] Intellect is ungenerable and incorruptible, why do we not *remember or love or hate* [emphasis added] after death? For these actions [i.e., thinking/remembering, loving, and hating] belong to powers different from that power [i.e., the power of the Possible Intellect]. . . . [The Possible Intellect] is not something changeable owing to a mixture with matter.[30]

Stanza 2 is more than anything else grounded in this passage from Averroes's *Long Commentary*: the first part of the stanza, linking loving (emotion) with remembering (reasoning), speaks of mortal human operations, while the second part speaks of the Possible Intellect's status as nonmaterial, purely intellectual, and eternal. As we will see, in Averroes remembering and thinking become synonyms and are strongly associated with emotions ("loving and hating") and disassociated from Intellection.[31]

Cavalcanti's aligning love with memory amounts to ascribing to it a lofty status: memory, in its highest mode as recollection, is part and parcel of what sets humans apart from and above animals; it is an essential element of the highest human faculty and in effect the basis for the rationality of the rational animal. Moreover, it is the faculty that grants humans their status as the only ethical species in the cosmos. We will discuss recollection below (in the second of the three excursuses that precede our commentary on Stanza 3); there we will see that, in league with loving, recollecting is a constitutive facet of human reason—part of the essential nature of the human species.

The accident called love, says Cavalcanti, is "formed, like [the] diaphanous by light, of a darkness that comes from Mars" (*formato, come/ diaffan da lume, d'una scuritate/la qual da Marte vène*; lines 16–18). A potentially diaphanous or transparent substance (for instance, air or water), when actually transparent, is a medium for the perception of visible objects. The transparent medium, however, is not the diaphanous itself: the latter, as a potential presence in a substance (in a medium), has a

peculiar ontological status.[32] Taken in isolation, a transparent substance does not exist as transparent, since its potential transparency is activated only when it is illuminated by light from an external source; air, absent any external source of light, is not actually (not *in actu*) transparent. The diaphanous is "formed" (rendered actually diaphanous) by something other than itself: by light.

Bearing in mind that Stanza 2 treats the insuperable gap between the mortal realm of human rational operations ("thinking/remembering, loving, and hating")—which are operations of the sensitive-imaginative soul—and the eternal realm of the Possible Intellect's *noesis*, we can grasp why Cavalcanti sets up an *analogy* between loving and the diaphanous.[33] The diaphanous was, for the Arabo-Islamic Aristotelians, by far the most common illustrative metaphor for the Possible Intellect. In *LC*, Averroes likens the Active Intellect to light and the Possible Intellect to the diaphanous:

> For just as light is the actuality of the transparent [*perfectio diaffoni*], so the Active Intellect is the actuality [*perfectio*] of the Possible Intellect. Just as the diaphanous [*diaffonum*] is not moved by color and does not receive it except when there is light, so too [the Possible] Intellect does not receive the intelligibles [*intellecta*] which are here [i.e., here in the sublunary, physical world] except insofar as it is actualized [*perficitur*] by [the Active] Intellect and illuminated by it. Just as light makes color in potency to be in act [*in actu*] in such a way that it can move the diaphanous [*diaffonum*], so the Active Intellect makes the intentions [*intentiones*] in potency to be intelligible in act in such a way that the Possible Intellect receives them.[34]

The diaphanous is not always actual but rather potentially actual until it is made actual by and as light; analogously, Guido says, loving is not always actual but rather potentially actual until it is made actual by and as "a darkness/that comes from Mars" (*una scuritate/la qual da Marte vène*; lines 17–18). Averroes uses light's activating the diaphanous (with, implicitly, the Sun as the source of light) as a loose metaphor for the Active Intellect's actualizing the Possible Intellect's intellections; similarly, Cavalcanti is using a darkness's activating the accident called loving (with Mars as the source of that darkness) as a loose metaphor for . . . what? Before answering, we should note that, precisely in the context of a discussion of the diaphanous and of Aristotle's likening the Active Intellect to light and intelligibles to colors, Averroes emphasizes that analogies such as this are not demonstrative science but are just exemplifying similitudes meant to help clarify one's argument.[35] Just as al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Averroes, when talking (in the context of Intellection) about the Sun, light, and the diaphanous, are not really

talking about those things, neither is Cavalcanti really talking about Mars and darkness. The "darkness that comes from Mars" is a similitude not meant to be taken as actual science; darkness does not mean darkness and Mars does not mean Mars.

Now, the Arabo-Aristotelian similitudes, drawing upon the Sun, light, transparency, colors, etc., are heuristic rhetorical devices aiming to clarify the scientific understanding of Intellect. But "intellect" is an equivocal term for two things that are quite different (as different as, say, light and darkness): theoretical intellect and practical intellect. In fact, the latter is not "intellect" properly speaking (although it is commonly said to be such); it is best to call this pseudo-intellect by another name such as practical reason or rationality. It is not *nous* but rather *dianoia*; not *intellectus* but rather *ratio*; not knowing but rather thinking. Since the Aristotelian analogy involving the Sun, light, and the diaphanous is used to talk about one kind of intellect (that kind that truly is Intellect), then—given how tightly these verses of *Donna me prega* are bound up with the relevant discussions in Averroes's *LC*—we can assume that Guido's analogy is meant to speak about the other kind of "intellect": practical reason. Darkness is, in the first instance, a way to distinguish, through a loose manner of speaking, the subject matter of *Donna me prega*'s science (the psychology and ethics of *praxis*) from the science involving a loose manner of speaking about light—the metaphysics of Intellection. Guido's assertation that loving is activated by and as "a darkness that comes from Mars" is an analogy for the real subject of discussion: the actualization of human potential rationality. To read lines 17–18 as having something to do with the actual planet Mars and actual darkness would be as erroneous as taking Averroes to be saying that the Active Intellect is the actual light of the actual Sun.[36] Guido's general aim in these verses is to insist on the logic of analogy: the actualization of the accident that is called loving is somehow like but essentially different from the Possible Intellect's actualization.

At this point, we have not progressed far enough in our commentary to explain darkness and Mars thoroughly; that explanation will be developed below. But as a preliminary step we can gather some helpful pointers regarding darkness. A diaphanous substance is neither light nor dark; one and the same thing may be dark at times, light at other times. As Aristotle explains:

> Darkness is the absence [*privatio*] from what is diaphanous of the corresponding positive state [*habitus*]; clearly, therefore, light is just the presence of that [*presentia istius intentionis*: "the presence of that intention"]. . . . What is dark . . . is the same as what is diaphanous, when it is potentially [*in potentia*], not of course when it is actually [*in perfectione*]; it is the same substance which is now darkness, now light.[37]

A dark substance is not eternally condemned to darkness; it is quite possible that it will become light. Stanza 2 traces the development into light of something initially associated with darkness. This itinerary has confused innumerable commentators, who fail to consider the possibility of such a path. In the case of *Donna me prega*, this difficulty is compounded by the fact that the thing in question takes up residence in two entirely distinct substances/substrates that do not ever connect.

Something dark may be potentially light—and more than anything may be called *potential* itself. As al-Farabi says in his *Letter on Intellect*: "The meaning of darkness is potential transparency and the privation of actual transparency."[38] Love as characterized by Cavalcanti (not a substance but an accident) may appear and disappear and so is especially appropriately considered as potential—i.e., as darkness. Potential can be conceived of variously, but in Aristotelian physics it is above all thought of as matter—as that which may possibly become something or, if it already is something, may possibly become something else. Throughout the Aristotelian tradition, "darkness" is recognized as a name for matter. Associating love with darkness, Guido is affirming that this accident of the soul is enmattered, involving the body. Indeed, it could not be otherwise, since Aristotle insists that all emotions are bodily:

> It seems also that all the affections of the soul involve the body: anger, mildness, fear, pity, boldness, and, furthermore, joy, and both loving and hating. For at the same time that these occur, the body is affected. . . . if this is the case, it is clear that the affections of the soul are enmattered reasonings [*logoi en hulêi*; *intentiones in materia*: "intentions in matter"]. . . . The affections of the soul are inseparable from the natural matter of animals.[39]

Guido's associating love with darkness tells us that this accident is "not separate from natural matter." Indicating that loving in some manner involves the reception of darkness amounts to asserting that it is an accident pertaining to a physical (sublunary) substance—since, as Averroes says, "a celestial substance never receives darkness."[40] At the same time it indicates that loving is triggered in the first instance by sense perception of a physical/material (i.e., "dark") object. The point to emphasize is that darkness here (line 17) is not meant to carry a negative (or dark) connotation: it is not a sign or cause of moral deficiency, failure, or vice—as it is often taken to be—but an objective and ethically neutral physical fact. Emotions are necessarily embodied—which is not to say that they are not rational: they are reasonings (*logoi*) in matter. As an emotion—an enmattered reasoning subsequent upon an act of sense perception of a physical object—loving cannot but involve a darkness. Darkness is not something of which to be ashamed.[41]

There is one more intriguing aspect to darkness as treated by Aristotle in his discussion of the diaphanous. Although we naturally think of the medium of visual perception as diaphanous (e.g., air, water, glass), certain things are perceived through a dark medium. Among such things that "in light are invisible but in darkness cause sense-perception," Aristotle mentions fungi, horns, and the scales and eyes of fish.[42] He is apparently primarily thinking of iridescence, conceived of as a lessening or indirection of light that allows for perception; these examples fail to account for things that become visible in extreme or total darkness. Averroes's commentary improves on this account, replacing fungi with seashells (a more familiar case of iridescence) and adding "several kinds of animals" (*plura animalia*) and stars as examples of things that "are seen in the dark but not in light" (*videntur in obscuro et non in luce*). With these additions, Averroes is emphasizing luminosity (including bioluminescence) more than iridescence: stars and certain animals, which in darkness "are perceived to be fiery and to become bright" (*videntur ignea et splendescere*),[43] possess an internal principle as the cause of their light. Below, when we find that Cavalcanti locates loving in a *mezzo scuro* ("dark medium"; line 68), we will see that this obscure issue treated in *De anima* sheds light on love's essential aspect as an intrinsic natural mode of illumination. The shadow cast by this darkness from Mars looms throughout the canzone.

Stanza 2 (b) Chi lo fa creare? (lines 19–28)

The second part of Stanza 2 is meant to address the question, "Who makes [love] exist"? (*chi lo fa creare*; line 10). The question is answered clearly, albeit obliquely. As we will see, this stanza treats and distinguishes between two subjects (i.e., substrates): the individual human being and the Possible Intellect. Loving is an operation of the human psyche, and it is the lover who, so to speak, "creates" his love. It is not correct to transform this "who" (*chi*) into a "what" (*che*), since doing so amounts to shifting the responsibility for love's existence to a power external to the human subject.[44] In truth, Cavalcanti assigns agency to the lover, not to some outside entity or force.

Love "is created from [things] sensed" (or: "from the sensate"—things perceived by the senses [*Elli è creato da sensato*; line 19]). This is to be expected, given the fundamentally empirical character of Aristotelianism: human desires and knowledge are derived, in the first instance, from our sense experience of natural things. Here Cavalcanti is ruling out the notion that this accident called loving is infused from above, as the effect of a metaphysical cause.

Love "is a name for [a] habit of the soul and [a] volition of the heart" (*nom'è/d'alma costume e de cor volontate*; lines 19–20). This emphasis on custom (*costume*) and will (*volontate*) indicates, plainly, that loving

is ethical and is in part a subject matter for practical philosophy—the branch of science that (as one of Dante's mentors, Brunetto Latini, tells us) treats virtues and customs/habits (*tratta le virtudi e le costumanze*).[45] For Aristotle, a single good action or a handful of good actions cannot be called virtue; rather, virtue is a habit: activity customarily repeated until it becomes, as it were, a second nature.

Cavalcanti's ascribing loving to the will (*volontate*) is itself sufficient to negate the validity of the standard (and, in effect, the only) previous interpretation of *Donna me prega*. For, in the texts that Cavalcanti studied, the voluntary is a certain type of desire: it is an ethical movement powered by a faculty that is uniquely human and that is tantamount to rationality—the power of cogitation. As Averroes says in *LC*:

> [Practical] intellect [i.e., rationality] does not seem to cause motion except voluntarily [*voluntarie*], just as imagination does not seem to cause motion without desire [*desiderio*]. The difference between will [*voluntatem*] and desire [*desiderium*] is that when will [*voluntas*] and desire [*desiderium*] cause motion, then will [*voluntas*] moves in virtue of cogitation [*cogitationem*], while desire [*desiderium*] moves but not in virtue of cogitation. Next [Aristotle] said: Desire [*desiderium*] is a certain kind of appetite [*appetitus*]. This is how it stood in the manuscript and it is wrong and should be read: Appetite is a certain kind of desire. That is, that the part of the soul which desires [*pars anime desiderans*] is what causes motion universally. If, therefore, it desires in virtue of cogitation, it will be called will [*voluntas*] and if it is without cogitation, it will be called appetite [*appetitus*]. This error is shown in the other translation, in which it is said: "Appetite, however, causes motion without cogitation, because appetite is a kind of desire."[46]

(We will explain the significance of cogitation—one of the keys to understanding the canzone—below; for now, it is enough to recognize cogitation as the rational and uniquely human mode of desire.) It would be hard to overestimate the importance of this passage for properly reading *Donna me prega*. Here Averroes, rightly, corrects the text of the Arabic translation that he is working with. In that text, Aristotle says that desire is a subcategory of the genus appetite; Averroes, consulting another translation, recognizes that Aristotle in fact says that appetite is a subcategory of the genus desire. Desire is a general term of which appetite and will are distinct specific kinds. Appetite (common to all animals including humans) moves through imagination alone, while will (a specifically human power) moves through imagination along with cogitation. Humans, when they desire without cogitating, desire appetitively: their desire then falls short of the human, since it is not *voluntas*. But the accident that is called loving is, says Guido, *voluntas*: "a will of the

heart" (*de cor volontate*; line 20). Clearly, what Cavalcanti has in mind in *Donna me prega* is not "a blind passion of the sensitive appetite"[47]; rather, it is cogitation—which is to say rational desire, motion powered by practical reason.

It will not do to object—invoking the modern heart (emotion) versus head (reason) dichotomy—that "will of the heart" might connote a nonrational desire. Aristotle famously maintained a cardiocentric view of the human subject: the heart is in effect the self, the seat of all human emotion and thought; the brain is assigned a mere refrigerative function.[48] Even if one were to maintain that humans possess a power of theoretical intellection (but Averroes rejects this) and that such intellection is separate from the thinking of the heart, it would remain the case that there can be no ethical *praxis* not caused by a voluntary movement of the heart:

> For theoretical [*theoretikos*] thought does not contemplate what is to be done, nor does it say anything about what to be avoided or pursued, but movement [i.e., the movement of *praxis*] always belongs to a thing which avoids or pursues something. But neither is it the case that, whenever thought contemplates this sort of object, it straight away commands that one avoid or pursue it. . . . *It is the heart that is moved*.[49]

In his commentary on this passage, Averroes says something that sounds strange to us (conditioned as we are to think in terms of heart versus head, emotion versus reason): that the heart cogitates.[50] Given that (as we will see below) cogitation is nothing less than rationality of the rational animal, this means that the heart, seat of practical reason, is the active subject that wills—i.e., that desires in the mode of *voluntas*: as Cavalcanti says, love is a volition of the heart (*de cor volontate*; line 20). The answer to the question posed in line 10, "Who makes love exist?" is this: the lover's very self.

Having indicated that the human self is the subject who is the agent of love, Cavalcanti—as if to reinforce this point through contrast—turns his attention to a different subject, one that is *not* the agent of love in any manner. Despite its clarity and coherence, the rest of Stanza 2 (lines 21–28) has caused considerable confusion among commentators. The confusion is rooted in the failure to recognize that the stanza involves multiple subjects, shifting from one to another as dictated by Cavalcanti's line of thinking. I refer to "subjects" here in both a grammatical and a philosophical sense. In this stanza, the (sometimes grammatically implied) subject pronoun "it" does not always refer to the accident that is called love: sometimes "it" means the *intentio* (a term that we will explain presently), and sometimes "it" means the Possible Intellect. Not coincidentally, "it" means love only in the first seven

verses of the stanza, while in the remaining seven verses "it" means the Possible Intellect. This shifting of the grammatical subject is in keeping with the stanza's main philosophical import: that the itinerary of the apprehension of the form of a sense-perceptible entity involves two different subjects—here, meaning substrates—that are absolutely distinct from each other ontologically. On the one hand there is *ratio* ("thinking, loving, and hating), the discourse of the human soul; on the other, there is *Intellectus*. The substrate of *ratio* is the human soul—that "place where memory exists" (line 15); the substrate of *Intellectus* is the Possible Intellect. (As we saw in Part Three, the Possible Intellect is the receptacle or the locus where the intelligible forms of *naturalia*, eternally activated by the Active Intellect's making them visible [to the Possible Intellect] in human phantasms, eternally dwell as actual.) This stanza is talking about two different dwelling places (*demora*, line 18; *dimoranza*, line 23), two incommensurable regions of reality—the one natural and human, the other metaphysical and divine. Although there is an itinerary by which something—e.g., an *intentio*—may pass from one realm to the other, in so passing it no longer remains itself: the change in substrate is a change in being. The stanza's grammatical subject shifts between these two realms; failure to take this into account renders these verses nonsensical.[51]

The difficulty begins with line 21: "It [i.e., the accident that is called love] comes from a seen form that is intended [i.e., apprehended/abstracted]" ("*ven da veduta forma che s'intende*"). On one level, this verse is unproblematic: it goes without saying that something seen is intended (we will explain the term "intention" presently), since all sense-perception *is* intention (Averroes: "sensation is [an] intention" [*sensus est intentio*][52]). Yet several commentators have taken *s'intende* to mean "understood" or "intellected" —an understandable confusion, since *intendere* can certainly mean "to understand."[53] This translation is not necessarily wrong (the stanza will soon—but not yet—assert that the "seen form" *is* intellected [although not by humans and not in a manner that has anything to do with love]), but it is misleading and fosters incoherent interpretations.

Line 21 has suffered from an enticing but more pernicious misreading (which serves as the foundation for several influential commentaries, including two recent efforts to cleanse *Donna me prega* of its Averroism): the notion that we should understand *s'intende* as signifying the specifically Avicennan meaning of the term *intentio*.[54] Avicenna's faculty of estimation, the object of which was called *intentio* in late medieval translations, is one of the internal senses: the power to perceive in an object something that is imperceptible to any of the five external senses. Avicenna's classic example of the perception of an "intention" is a sheep's perceiving a wolf as something to fear and its own offspring as something to love.[55] There is a certain appeal to the thought that love for Cavalcanti is

akin to an estimation, since this thought allows for the formulation of an interpretation of the canzone that is at least interesting. The basic point of this reading is that love, as an estimation, is an *overestimation* of the worth of one's beloved, as if she were uniquely lovable: to an objective, neutral observer, she may well be perceived as no more or less lovable than anyone else. As Peter of Spain puts it: lovesickness is "a failure or damaging of the estimative faculty, which judges one thing to be superior to all others."[56] But regarding Cavalcanti's *intentio* as Avicenna's estimation does not provide a foundation for a sustained reading of the canzone as a whole. And, at any rate, this reading can be categorically ruled out: Love, says Cavalcanti, comes from a *seen* form that is intended; Avicenna's *intentio* is precisely the opposite: an intention that comes from nothing seen. Peter of Spain's *Questions on the Viaticum*, a favorite text of those who advocate for a medical, Avicennan, and non-Averroist interpretation of *Donna me prega*, makes perfectly clear that an estimation is the apprehension of a *non-sensed* form: "Et virtutis estimative sit apprehendere formam *insensatam*" ("And it is the estimative faculty's task to apprehend a *non-sensed* form").[57] But line 21's *veduta forma*—a form perceived by the external sense of sight—is surely a *sensed* form—not to mention that Cavalcanti says that love is created from something *sensate* (*Elli è creato da sensato*; line 19).

One must insist that Cavalcanti is referring here (line 21) neither to intellection (understanding) nor to estimation but to the psychological process of producing an "intention" (*intentio*): the progressive "spiritualization" (abstraction) of matter that takes place as the form of the perceived object makes its way through the various internal senses in the sensitive soul. The *intentio* is the form of the sensed object as it exists in the organs of sensation or mentally; it is "a sensible [cf. *veduta*, 'seen'; line 21; *sensato*; line 19] form separate from matter."[58] Whereas Aristotle seems to have maintained that the form in the object itself and the form in the sensing or knowing subject are both the same form, the Arabs and the Latin scholastics argued for a distinction between the two kinds of forms—the latter kind being termed "intentions":

> In the terminology of Avicenna and Averroes, the "form as it is known," whether on the level of sensation or the level of intellection, is constantly referred to [by Latin scholastics] as, respectively, *intentio imaginata* and *intentio intellecta*. . . . So, in the soul there are intentions and apprehensions, while outside the soul there are neither intentions nor apprehensions, but only material things not apprehended at all.[59]

Yet ultimately, through positing the *intentio intellecta*, Averroes collapses the distinction between the real form of the object and that form as it is known: the *intentio intellecta* and the thing's intelligible form are

identical. This point demands emphasis, since we will see soon that the last few verses of Stanza 2 rely on this identity between the fully actualized *intentio* and the quiddity/essence/intelligible form.[60] Averroes is only able to do this by insisting that the *intentio intellecta* is not ever known *by us*: it is not the intellected form in the human mind; rather, its home is the Possible Intellect, not the sensitive-imaginative soul.

The *intentio* of a natural substance is not static and unitary; there is a hierarchy or procession of stages, on each of which the *intentio* of a material entity's intelligible form is not the same as that entity's *intentio* on a lower or preceding stage.[61] This is why Stanza 2 can speak of two different dwelling places (in two different realms) of the intention of one and the same "seen form": the place where an *intentio* makes itself at home (*fa demora*; line 18) and the place (*loco*; line 23) where an *intentio* takes up residence (*prende dimoranza*; lines 22–23). For Cavalcanti and Averroes, the former is a human (and natural) and the latter a superhuman (and supernatural) dwelling place. We need to emphasize *both* the real difference and the continuity between levels of *intentio*: the notion of a hard-and-fast distinction that nonetheless pertains to a continuum expresses perfectly Cavalcanti's treatment of the *intentio* of the "seen form" in Stanza 2. *Donna me prega* is primarily concerned with human operations grounded in the apprehension by the human sensitive soul, on the level of imagination, of the things of our sublunary world: the *intentio imaginata*. But with the second part of Stanza 2, Cavalcanti pauses to indicate that there is a larger continuity, extending beyond human capacity, within which the potentially intelligible form of a sense-perceptible substance is actually intellected: the *intentio intellecta*.[62] The second part of the stanza is not about love but about the ultimate destiny of the *intentio*, its perpetual residence up in a higher-than-human rung of the ladder of intelligibility. But, as we will see, the real value, for us, of the *intentio*—its perfection, for us—resides in its status as *intentio imaginata*: not that it enables, for us, actual understanding of intelligible reality but that it drives and guides our ethical action.

So, to say that something "is intended" (*s'intende*; line 21) is by no means the same as to say that it is understood or intellected: the "seen form" is sensed or imagined with its individuating conditions, not known as a universal. Taking *s'intende* to mean "intellected" at this point in the poem sets even the most insightful of modern commentators down the wrong path.[63] In saying that the accident called love "comes from a seen form that is intended" (i.e., that is apprehended/abstracted from matter to some degree; line 21), Cavalcanti is—up to this point in the canzone—making no claim concerning the intellection of that form. Rather, he is saying that the proximate cause of such an accident is sense-perception of a natural entity.

The second part of Stanza 2 (starting with line 22) does, however, deal with Intellection, and thus we can understand the considerable confusion

among the commentators.[64] The pitfall to be avoided is any suggestion that the Intellection in question (lines 22–28) either is an operation of a human agent or has anything to do with loving. The accident called love "comes from a seen form that is abstracted (*s'intende*) and that [also, ultimately, as an *intentio intellecta*] takes [its] place and [takes up] residence in the Possible Intellect as in substrate [*in subietto*]" (lines 21–23).

Lines 24–28 are relatively straightforward: they present the Possible Intellect as eternal and immaterial, while denying any relation or communication between loving and that Intellect. The primary difficulty posed by line 24 (*in quella parte mai non ha possanza/pesanza/posanza*) is establishing the literal meaning, which requires us to choose between three philosophically sound variants: is the line's final word to be read as *possanza* ("potency," "potential"), *pesanza* ("weight," "grief," "pain"), or *posanza* ("residence," "dwelling place," "seat" [in the sense of base of operation]). Although a reasonable case can be made for each, the most philosophically apt alternative is *possanza* as "potency/potential."[65] At any rate, these three variant readings are in consensus on the main point—namely, that the accident called love, involving an at least partly corporeal *intentio* in the sensitive-imaginative soul, has no relation with the Possible Intellect. And the reason for this is clearly explained, as the thought continues in the following line: "It [i.e., the *intentio*] has no potency in that place [i.e., in the Possible Intellect], because it [i.e., the Possible Intellect] is not generated from qualities [i.e., from matter: *da qualitate non descende*]" (lines 24–25). Given that matter and potential are (as we saw above) in effect synonyms and that the Possible Intellect is entirely immaterial, the Possible Intellect has no trace of potentiality: it is always actual. In the Possible Intellect, the *intentio* is no longer potentially the intelligible form because it just *is* the intelligible form. The key term here is *qualitates* ("qualities")—which in this case is a name for the most elementary principles of material bodies.[66] In his *LC*, glossing a passage in which Aristotle denies that the intellect is "mixed with the body" (since if it were, says Aristotle, it "would acquire some *quality*, such as warmth or coldness, or even have an organ like the sensitive faculty"[67]), Averroes remarks that it is precisely its absence of *qualitas* that proves that the Possible Intellect is "neither a body nor a power in a body":

> If [the Possible Intellect] were a power in a body, then it would be a disposition and a bodily quality [*qualitas*]; and, if it were to have quality [*si haberet qualitatem*], then that quality either would be ascribed to warmth or to coldness . . . or it would be a quality existing in a compound although only added to the compound, as is the case with the sensitive soul and similar things, and it would have a corporeal organ. . . . But the Possible Intellect has no quality [*non habet qualitatem*] ascribed to warmth or coldness, and it has no organ; therefore it is not mixed with the body.[68]

In saying that the Possible Intellect is not generated from the primary principles of corporeality (*da qualitat'e' non descende*), Cavalcanti is insisting, like Averroes here, on the Possible Intellect's pure immateriality; this immateriality explains why, dwelling in the substrate that is the Possible Intellect, the *intentio* (= intelligible form) is never in potency (*mai non ha possanza*; line 24) but always in act: lacking matter, the Possible Intellect has no potential to alter.

Stanza 2's final verses (lines 26–28) continue to characterize the Possible Intellect (substrate of the *intentio* as intelligible form, as *intentio intellecta*) and its alterity with respect to the human sensitive soul (substrate of the *intentio* as an at least to some degree corporeal image that remains potentially but not actually intelligible: as *intentio imaginata*).

The Possible Intellect's resplendent self-shining (*resplende in sé perpetual effetto* ["It shines in itself, a perpetual effect"; line 26) goes hand-in-hand with its status as a locus where potential is always already completely actualized—where, since every *intentio* there just is intelligible form, there is never a remainder of potency (line 24). The supreme splendor, says Avicenna, is the pure actuality, self-sufficiency with no trace of potency, and goodness of the intelligible form: "There can be neither beauty nor splendor above the quiddity's [i.e., the intelligible form's] being purely intellectual, pure goodness, free from each one of the facets of deficiency."[69] The resplendent is the *good*. This latter is, as Albertus Magnus defines it in his monumental *De bono* (*On the Good*), "the undividedness of act from potency" (*indivisio actus a potentia*)—a definition of goodness that Albert here attributes to Avicenna.[70] Indeed, for Avicenna goodness—hence, splendor—is the full dissolution of potency into actuality: "For potentiality is a deficiency, while actuality is a perfection. The good in all things is in conjunction with being actual."[71] In the Possible Intellect, the *intentio* is no longer a representation or similitude but is the intelligible form (quiddity/essence) itself. The Possible Intellect, as the substrate of intelligible forms that are always actual, is a place where there is never potency (line 24: "There is never potency in that place"). The Possible Intellect, having no deficiency on account of which it would be divided from its actuality, is good—and, accordingly, it shines (*resplende*; line 26).

Since the Intellect is immaterial, it is necessarily also eternal, neither generable nor corruptible, a fact which Cavalcanti declares in the latter part of line 26: "It shines in Itself as perpetual effect" (*resplende in sé perpetual effetto*). In *LC*, Averroes teaches that the Possible Intellect always actually knows every intelligible: it perpetually possesses total science.[72]

Just as the Possible Intellect cannot be a place of "pain" (*pesanza*, in one of the variant readings of line 24's final word—a reading which, even if we do not endorse it, is nonetheless philosophically sound), neither can it be the site of "pleasure" (*diletto*), as Cavalcanti says in line

27: "It [i.e., the Possible Intellect] does not have pleasure/delight but rather contemplation" (*non ha diletto, ma consideranza*). Pleasure, according to one of Aristotle's various accounts, always involves sensation, including the kind of sensation that is imagination (e.g., memory of past or hope of future pleasure).[73] Since the Intellect has neither sensation nor imagination, it cannot have *diletto*.

Rather, the Possible Intellect's felicity, says Cavalcanti, is *consideranza* ("It does not have pleasure/delight but [rather] contemplation" [*non ha diletto, ma consideranza*]; line 27). Although in Scholastic usage *consideratio* does not necessarily mean *theoria* (the contemplation/intellection of intelligible forms), there is a prominent passage in Averroes's *LC* (the key passage on "thinking, loving, and hating" that we have mentioned above and will discuss repeatedly below) where *consideratio* means precisely that. Commenting on Aristotle's claim that "to understand [*noeîn*: *intelligere*] and to contemplate [*theorein*: *consideratio*] are distinguished when something else inside undergoes corruption, but it in itself [*in se*; see Cavalcanti's line 26: *in sé*] is affected by nothing," Averroes reads the difference between *intelligere* and *considerare* as a distinction between so-called "intellection" (the degree of understanding attainable by human thinking, which is "sometimes in potency and sometimes in act") and the eternally actual Intellection of the Intellecting Intellect [*intellectus intelligens*] itself: the latter—eternally actual Intellection—is here termed, in the Latin of the *LC*, *consideratio*.[74]

To gloss Stanza 2's closing line—"a verse of very uncertain meaning"[75]—one must first decide between reading *là gire* ("to go there"; "to arrive/reach there") and *largire* ("to give/offer/grant"). If one opts for *largire*, there are several reasonable ways to read line 28.[76] I prefer *là gire*, since the thought thus established (*sì che non pote là gir simiglianza*: "since a similitude cannot reach there" [i.e., cannot attain the level/status of the Possible Intellect]) follows directly from the preceding line's treatment of *consideranza* and is most faithful to the specific philosophical context that runs throughout the stanza.[77] The assertion that a similitude (= an *intentio imaginata*) cannot reach the Possible Intellect follows smoothly from what is said in lines 26–27 regarding that Intellect as resplendent *consideratio*. An *intentio* in its normal state is both the signified thing (as an abstraction of the thing's form/meaning from a material shell) and a signifying similitude of the thing, still subject to further abstraction.[78] But when the noetic process is fully achieved, the *intentio*—having become a *res abstractum*—dwells in the Possible Intellect as a pure signified; in fact, it has itself become (part of, so to speak) a separate substance, a divine entity. In this state of undividedness of potency and act (see line 28: *non pote*) there is no possibility of further abstraction and thus no possibility that the *intentio* might still serve as a signifier/similitude (*simiglianza*); hence a similitude will never be found to have gone to dwell in the Possible Intellect: *non pote là gir*

simiglianza: "[a] similitude cannot go there." This reading is confirmed by a passage from Averroes's *Epitome of 'Parva Naturalia'*: "similitude" [*forma similis*] and *intentio* (along with "spiritual form") are in effect synonyms.[79]

Stanza 2 is a brilliantly coherent and—given *Donna me prega*'s reputation for obscurity and the high degree of confusion among the commentators—a remarkably clear and sophisticated expression of Cavalcanti's brand of Averroism. Contrary to those optimists who celebrate the possibility of the Conjunction, Guido insists on the disjunction between the human and the divine.[80] The human sensitive soul, with its loves, reasonings, recollections, understandings, sensations, images, memories, hopes, and pleasures, is one thing, while the Intellect (immaterial, eternal, impassible) is an entirely other thing. There is, for us, no place where these two will ever meet, nor is there a trajectory by which we can ascend from one to the other place. The *intentio*, on the other hand, *can* make that passage from substrate to substrate—although having done so it is completely altered, no longer a similitude or a spiritual form, no longer itself. To claim that with *Donna me prega* Cavalcanti maintains that love impedes us from attaining knowledge/intellection—as so many have and still do—is just wrong. Our lack of intellection is not caused by our loving, and it is not avoidable; rather, it is simply a natural fact. Blaming this fact on love would be foolish: there is never intellection for us, period.[81]

Stanza 3

Non è vertute, — ma da quella vène
ch' è perfezione — (ché si pone — tale),
non razionale, — ma che sente, dico.
For di salute — giudicar mantene,
ché la 'ntenzione — per ragione — vale:
discerne male — in cui è vizio amico.
Di sua potenza segue spesso morte,
se forte — la vertù fosse impedita,
la quale aita — la contraria via:
non perché oppost'a naturale sia:
ma, quanto che da buon perfetto tort'è
per sorte, — non pò dire om ch'aggia vita,
ché stabilita — non ha segnoria.
A simil pò valer quand'om l'oblia.

([Love] is not a power [*vertute*], but it comes from that [power] that is said to be a perfection—I don't mean the rational but rather the sensitive [power]. It [i.e., the sensitive power] prevents healthy judgment, since it equates [*vale*] an *intentio* with reasoning [*ragione*].

> He who is a friend to vice discerns [i.e., between right and wrong] poorly. Death often follows from its potency [i.e., from a faculty of the sensitive power] if perchance the faculty which furthers the contrary course [i.e., reason] should be impeded—not because it [i.e., reason] is opposed to the natural, but insofar as one cannot say, concerning a person who is fated to be diverted from the perfect good [*buon perfetto*], that such a person is alive, for he has not established mastery [over himself]. This can amount to the same thing when one forgets it [i.e., reason].)

Anyone who has studied Dante's *Comedy* knows the important role granted to the structural/formal center of the work. Two instances of the phrase *libero arbitrio* ("free will," in the sense of active volition/choice), symmetrically inscribed with mathematical precision, frame the central canto (17) of *Purgatory* and thus mark the center of the work as a whole. That central canto (with its continuation in Canto 18) contains—as the core of *Comedy*—Virgil's magisterial discourse on love and reason as the foundation of ethics.

Stanza 3 is the center of *Donna me prega*, the third of its five stanzas. It is also the stanza where the canzone turns from psychology to ethics. Now, what is remarkable—given scholars' virtually unanimous claim that for Cavalcanti love is irrational and that Dante, breaking with his *primo amico*, revalues love as rational, thus coming into his own as Dante, lover of Beatrice—is that the key message located at the center of their respective masterpieces is the same: love, as freely chosen desire, is the operation of human rationality—the very human essence—and the foundation of ethics.[82]

The canzone's turn from psychology (Stanza 2) to ethics (Stanza 3) is no accident. At the opening of *DA*, Aristotle names psychology's contribution "to the advance of truth in general, and, above all, to our understanding of nature" as one of the chief reasons for the position of priority that it holds among the sciences.[83] Averroes opens *LC* by adding a substantial declaration of psychology's value for other sciences—above all, for ethics (of which no mention is made in the corresponding section in Aristotle):

> [Psychology] supplies more principles for more sciences [than do other sciences], for example, [it supplies principles] for moral science [i.e., ethics]—that is, the science of governing states[84]—and for divine science [i.e., metaphysics]. For from [psychology] moral science gets *the final end of human beings considered as human beings* [*ultimum finem hominis in eo quod est homo*] and the knowledge of what their substance is [i.e., rational animal]. The practitioner of divine science gets from it the substance of his subject. For here [in psychology] it will be explained that the separate forms are

> intelligences and also many other things concerning the knowledge of states consequent upon intelligence considered as intelligence and intellect.[85]

As we will see presently, Stanza 3, through consideration of powers of the soul, converges on a declaration of the final end (*buon perfetto*, the "perfect good"; line 39) of human beings *considered as human beings*. The canzone's remaining two stanzas go on to discuss both ethics and metaphysics through principles derived from psychology.

Before the exegesis of Stanza 3, we must offer three excursuses on matters that are crucial—indispensable, really—for understanding the canzone. The first is an exposition of Averroes's of notion of love as cogitation; the second treats memory in the human mode: as recollection; the third revisits Mars, establishing the kind of desire that planet represents: desire operating through recollection—i.e., irascible desire. These three excursuses, culminating with insight regarding the rationality of irascible desire, are intimately related.

Excursus I: Averroes on the Rationality of Emotion

In *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle divides the human rational soul into a part that has *logos* and a part that is *alogos* ("without logos," usually translated "irrational"). He places "anger and wishing and desire" in the latter part, while reserving the former part for "reason" and "understanding" (*logismos* and *nous*).[86] At first glance this division seems to relegate emotions to an extrarational status, situating them somewhere other than the place of reason. Closer attention shows that Aristotle's distinction between the irrational and the rational elements of the soul is a soft one. The irrational (emotional and desiring) element "seems to have a share in reason"; in morally virtuous persons the irrational part of the rational soul, "on all matters, speaks the same language [*homophōnei*] as reason."[87] Aristotle indicates that emotion plays at least some role (according to some accounts, the predominant role) in establishing those aims or ends that human beings deem rational.[88] What choice should a human being make in a certain realm of action? The answer is not just given by reason; it is also conceived by desire. Aristotle emphasizes this reciprocal relation in a formulation that avoids giving priority to either the *logos* part or the *alogos* part: "Good action is an end [*telos*], and desire [*oresis*] aims at this. Hence choice is either desiderative thought [*orektikos nous*] or intellectual desire [*oresis dianoētikē*]."[89] Insofar as an end or aim (*telos*) is established by reason, the attainment of this aim depends on a motivation provided by desire; insofar as an end or aim is established by desire, the means to attain this aim needs to be guided by reason. Both the establishment and the attainment of morally virtuous human ends involve cooperation between

the so-called rational and irrational parts of the human soul, between emotion and desire/love, on the one hand, and reason and intellect, on the other.

Just as Aristotle divides the rational soul into two parts, a *logos* part and an *alogos* part, so does he divide the *logos* part into two parts:

> Let us now draw a similar distinction within the part that possesses reason. And let it be assumed that there are two parts which possess reason—one by which we contemplate the kind of things whose principles cannot be otherwise, and one by which we contemplate variable things.[90]

This is a distinction between reason concerned with matters of *theoria* and reason concerned with matters of *praxis*. Aristotle characterizes the former as science that attains true knowledge of things that are universal and eternal, "things that cannot be otherwise" and that are "impossible for [human beings] to do"; the latter involves deliberation about "things which are good and bad for humans," "the just and noble and good for humans," and "things that will make a man happy."[91] Since such things are contingent (i.e., they can be otherwise), practical reason involves opinion rather than certain knowledge, judgments concerning good and bad rather than truth and falsity. In short, Aristotle divides the *logos* part of the rational soul into a theoretical part that aims for certain knowledge of nonhuman (metaphysical, mathematical, and physical) truths and a practical part that gives counsel concerning right desires (or concerning the right means to attain a desired end) in matters involving morality, economics, and politics.

Neoplatonic and early medieval Christian commentators tend to codify the notion that there are two kinds of rationality into a distinction between reason properly speaking (*logos*, *ratio*) and something higher—mind or intellect (*nous*, *intellectus*). Sometimes this means a distinction between *praxis* and *theoria*, other times one between discursive reasoning and immediate intellectual intuition. In either case, reason properly speaking is associated with the temporal and the human, whereas mind or intellect is associated with the eternal and the divine.[92]

Aristotle's division of the *logos* part of the rational soul into two parts, one human and the other divine, was a primary source of inspiration for those medieval philosophers who, as adherents of monotheistic religions, hoped to remain within the boundaries of orthodoxy while at the same time fostering (although surreptitiously and for a very small, elite audience) a fully rationalist view of reality and of the place of human beings in the cosmos. The claim that we are rational—which no rationalist would want to deny—has often been taken (for example, by Aquinas) as the claim that we are intellective and thus as proof that we are, unlike all other animals, quasi-divine, that is, immortal. By affirming

our rationality while rejecting our intellective status, leading medieval Islamic and Jewish rationalist philosophers (notably, al-Farabi, Averroes, and Maimonides) provided a decisive interpretation of Aristotle's definition of human beings as rational animals. This interpretation should be taken as an affirmation not of our immortality and potential divinity (i.e., immateriality) but of our ineluctable mortality and animality (i.e., materiality). As Averroes says in *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*:

> Since a human consists of two qualities, one being a general quality—namely, animality—and the second a particular quality—namely, rationality—a human remains human just as little when we take away his animality as when we take away his rationality, for animality is a condition of rationality, and when the condition is removed the conditioned is removed equally.[93]

Possessing reason distinguishes us from all other animals, but the fact remains that we are animals and not gods.[94] For these philosophers, we are essentially rational but only accidentally (if ever) intellective: we possess the power of reason (*logos*, *ratio*), but it is doubtful whether we ever truly possess the power of intellect (*nous*, *intellectus*). It is precisely our essential animality that precludes the possibility that we can be truly intellective: there is no such thing as an animal intellect, since intellect is never embodied or in any way material. This doubt that we possess a share of divinity amounts to a development of Aristotle's suggesting that human beings do not really share with the gods the power of *nous*.[95] It is no coincidence that Aristotle defines a human being as "the animal possessing reason" (*zoon logon echon*), not "the animal possessing intellect."

Averroes asserts that Aristotle divides the *logos* part of the rational soul into a part that knows and a part that thinks. The former involves *theoria* and is rarely if ever possessed by human beings; the latter involves *praxis* and is possessed by all: "It seems that by to know he meant here theoretical knowledge and by to think practical knowledge, since practical thinking is common to all but knowing [i.e., *theoria*] is not."[96] For Averroes, practical thinking, common to all human beings, is the essential form of the human species. To excel in thinking is to excel in practicing what is good and bad for human beings, and such thinking is something quite distinct from having knowledge of what is true or false.

Averroes takes seriously and as nonnegotiable Aristotle's stipulation that a life of intellect (*nous*) "would be too high for man" and that such a life "is divine in comparison with human life." But where Aristotle at least holds open the possibility that "something divine is present in man" (this something being the power of intellect, *nous*) and that we might to some degree "make ourselves immortal,"[97] Averroes in the end resolutely denies that we possess any element of divinity. He comes to

this position through a refusal to compromise concerning the reality of intellect: because intellect is never embodied or affected by bodies in any way, there is no sense in which it can inhere in or belong to human beings. Rather, human beings have knowledge only in an equivocal way: their knowing is in fact not knowing but *phantasia,* imagination: they can never do better than think with particular images, no matter how close their power to abstract might bring those images to being purely intelligible universals. (Once again Averroes makes a decisive determination on a question that Aristotle has left open—namely, whether human thinking "proves to be a form of imagination" and "impossible without imagination," thus requiring "a body as a condition of its existence."[98]) For Averroes, insofar as we are involved in a knowing that does in fact happen, it is not we who do the knowing: the knowing takes place in a superlunary, nonhuman, eternal, immaterial intelligence, the Possible Intellect. Although the imaginative power of the human soul plays an indispensable role in an eternal act of Intellection, an act that is not ours, imagination is nonetheless a bodily power, not an Intellect; it is generated and corruptible—that is, mortal.

Averroes, then, reconceives Aristotle's configuration of the rational soul. Venturing without fear down a path indicated to him by Aristotle, Averroes completely separates Intellect (*nous*, *intellectus*) from the human and elevates it above the realm of things that are generable and corruptible: Intellect is immaterial, eternal, divine. The rational soul is thus left as the locus of reason and of emotion and desire. Averroes in effect disambiguates the so-called rationality of the rational soul: in contrast to those (Aquinas is the most relevant example) who maintain that human rationality includes both the power of logos (*ratio*) and the power of *nous* (*intellectus*), Averroes regards our rationality as pertaining solely to our power of reasoning concerning *praxis*.[99]

Having excised intellect from the human soul, Averroes combines the remaining *logos* and *alogos* parts, treating reason and emotion as functions that dwell together in the same power. This is especially clear in a passage where he emphasizes the distinction between Intellect (*nous*), which is "not generable or corruptible" and thus eternal and nonhuman, on the one hand, and the human power of "thinking, loving, and hating" (*ratio*) on the other.[100] A more commonplace classification, of course, would group intellect with thinking and set those two as distinct from loving and hating. Averroes explains why thinking (reason) may be grouped with loving and hating (emotion/desire): "Thinking . . . is attributed to the cogitative power, loving and hating are attributed to reason [and] . . . are receptive of the action of reason."[101] Adding an emphasis not present in the passage from Aristotle that he is glossing, Averroes concludes that thinking, loving, and hating "are not actions of that Intellect [i.e., of the nonhuman, eternal, immaterial Possible Intellect]."[102] The Possible Intellect's knowing is eternal Intellection of

its objects and never has anything to do with morality or ethics. The human power of thinking, loving, and hating, however, is mortal and is bound up with *praxis*. This is the only kind of rational power that human beings have, and it perishes when the body perishes. "Rational animal," in effect, means ethical animal, one endowed with the kind of desire (namely, emotion) that is an integral aspect of practical reason. Our rationality—the defining essence of the human species—not only is a matter of our thinking but also must include our loving and hating. *The place of human reason is the place of emotion—and, in the first instance, the place of loving.*

What can we say about this thinking that involves loving—that is, about human reason as conceived by Averroes? For one thing, it is a kind of discerning (see line 34: *discerne*): "Discerning is found only in what has reason."[103] Thinking, human discerning, human reason, and practical intellect seem to be synonymous with what Averroes calls the "cogitative power," which is possessed by human beings but by no other animals: "[A]side from the rational animal none has cogitation because none has reason"; "The cogitative power proper to human beings . . . is a kind of reason."[104] By "a kind of reason," he does not mean that there is some other kind of human reason in comparison with which cogitation would be relatively or equivocally rational. Rather, he means that human reason, cogitation, is relatively rational in comparison with what is truly "rational" (i.e. noetic), intellectual—namely, the Active/Possible Intellect.

Human discerning, unlike the intellective activity of the Possible Intellect, involves particulars rather than universals: "For the cogitative power according to Aristotle is an individual discerning power, namely because it discerns something only in an individual way, not in a universal way."[105] That cogitation as human reason involves *praxis* ("We cogitate concerning the things which will come about by our action") goes hand-in-hand with the discerning of individuals.[106] There are no true universals in *praxis*, since, as Aristotle says in *Nicomachean Ethics*, the human good "involve[s] many differences of opinion and many changing ideas" and "seems to exist by convention and not by nature."[107] Toward the end of *LC*, the association between cogitation and practical reason becomes explicit: "The cogitative practical [reason] differs from the theoretical intellect in actuality and end. For the end of the theoretical intellect is just to know, while that of the practical [reason] is to act."[108] "Rational animal," then, means that human beings have a power that sets them apart from and above all other animals, a power involved with freedom and choice in the realm of action. To say that we are rational animals is to say that, unlike all other animals, we are free to choose to do this and not that.[109]

How does this freedom work? Averroes is quite precise about this. First, he emphasizes that the cogitative power (reason) and the power

of human desire (emotion) are one and the same. Glossing Aristotle's remark that "there is therefore one mover," he rejects the possibility that human action is moved by two powers, "namely, [practical] intellect per se and the desiring [i.e., loving] power per se insofar as they are different"—his point here being that these are *not* two different powers: "It is necessary that the [practical intellect] itself be a cause of motion insofar as *it is what desires* . . . and not insofar as desire is a different power from the [practical] intellect."[110] He dismisses out of hand the notion that reason and emotion are conflicting forces, a notion that undergirds virtually all previous readings of *Donna me prega*. His assigning reason and emotion to the same power necessarily commits him—according to a fundamental principle that has a tradition going back to Aristotle and Plato—to the denial that reason and emotion can ever be in conflict.[111] As the inner motivation of virtuous action, the desiring or emotional power is the same as the reasoning power. For the rational animal, the power of desire *is* practical intellect (i.e., the cogitative power, human reason, a complex mode of imagination); for all other animals, the power of desire is simple imagination. Averroes explicitly asserts that the power of practical intellect is part and parcel of the power of human imagination:

> What [Aristotle] said concerning the practical intellect should be understood concerning the imagination, for animals are universally moved by imagination. If, therefore, form [i.e., the mental image/*intentio* of the desired object] is imagined on the basis of cogitation, then motion will be ascribed to the practical intellect. If it is not [imagined] on the basis of cogitation, then it will be ascribed to the [animal] imaginative power itself. What moves the animal, namely, the power of desire, is one also. This is either [practical] intellect [in human beings] or imagination [in nonhuman animals], insofar as *each is what has desire*.[112]

In other words, human beings sometimes act in accordance with rational desires (emotions/will: "thinking, loving, and hating") and sometimes in accordance with animal desires (appetites). But in either case they are moved by imagination. Cogitation is in effect a higher power of imagination than the animal imaginative power. The difference between human beings and animals is that human beings, in addition to the power of imagination shared by all animals, have a higher mode of imagination, the cogitative power. This is a truly striking assertion: "What has desire" (i.e., what *loves*) in human beings is reason! (And so, if Cavalcanti is an Averroist—as he is—then the notion that his aim in *Donna me prega* is to show that love poses a grave threat to reason could not be farther off the mark.) The Aristotelian agreement between the *logos* and the *alogos* parts of the human soul has become real unity, and emotion and reason, as two aspects of the same power, have become indivisible.

Cogitation is the human power to do something with images that animals cannot do: to hold in the mind for comparison a multiplicity of images (e.g., imagined scenarios of future pleasure and pain) and, by discerning among them, to choose to do one thing rather than another:

> Imagination exists in other animals, while cogitation exists in rational animals. For choosing to do this imagined thing and not another belongs to the activity of cogitation [i.e., to the specifically human mode of imagination], not to the activity of [animal] imagination.[113]

The cogitative power "reviews imaginings" and "judges what is more pleasurable"—that is, "judges that this imagined thing is more pleasant than another."[114] (See line 32: *giudicar*, "to judge.") Thinking, loving, and hating essentially involve making judgments. Animal imagination is a "simple motion"[115] that functions immediately, in the present, on perception of a desirable object "without there being a contrary desire."[116] (See line 37: *la contraria via*, "the contrary way.") Since "no contrary desire occurs to . . . the imagination, . . . the animal moves toward that desired object."[117] Desires that involve no choice among competing desires, no discerning judgment between many images, are called appetites. To say that animals are not rational is just to say that they cannot compare and choose among contrary or alternative desires, having only appetites. Whereas animal imagination is confined to a single scenario in the present (and so, insofar as an animal might choose this rather than that, such a choice is between two images that are present), human beings are able to compare the present image with an imagined future:

> Some desires are contrary to others, this occurring when there are opposite desires for the same thing. This sort of contrariety occurs to an animal who apprehends time—namely, a rational animal—for [such an animal] apprehends in the present something in the object other than that which he apprehends in it in the future. For example, it apprehends that the object is pleasant now, but injurious in the future. It is the appetitive faculty which moves toward present pleasure and the [practical] intellect [i.e., the cogitative power] which judges its future harm.[118]

Cogitation involves a temporal dimension that is a prerequisite for all ethics. It is the reviewing of many possible imagined scenarios and the free selection of the more pleasant among them. The determination that one imagined future outcome is better than another is called opinion and belief and is unique to rational animals:

> Cogitation reviews imaginings and compares them until it is able to be affected by the imagination of some one of these. This is the reason why a rational animal has opinion, for opinion is belief which

> arises from cogitation. . . . Aside from the rational animal, none has cogitation because none has reason. The motion of [nonrational] animals is due to pleasure and it is simple motion, not complex motion. This is because it does not have the cogitative power together with appetite in such a way that these two powers command one another to the extent that the animal is moved sometimes on account of will [*propter voluntatem*—i.e., free choice, cogitation; see line 20: *de cor volontate*] as is [solely] the case in regard to the rational animal.[119]

The reason that grounds our practical choices—the opinion or belief that we should do one thing and not another—is not knowledge of the way things are but a preference for what is most desirable. Reason is not something higher than imagination but a mode of imagination more complex than what nonrational animals are capable of. Rational human action, like animal passion, is a matter of being affected by the imagination; unlike animals, however, human beings are capable of freely choosing to be affected by one image rather than by another. What Averroes here calls "complex motion," uniquely human, ethical, is a clash or conflict between a desire and some other motivating force against which that desire must compete. Yet this is a clash not between desire and reason but between two different kinds of desire: animal appetite (a simple motion toward the pleasant or away from the painful) and human love or will (cogitation—that is, choosing one from among a set of more and less pleasant images).[120] The reasonable and desirable (i.e. lovable) are one and the same: "Cogitation [i.e., reason] is a desiderative [i.e., an emotional] power."[121]

Excursus II: Recollection, Cogitation, and Time

As we have just seen, Averroes says that the power of cogitation belongs only to "an animal who apprehends time—namely, a rational animal—for [such an animal] apprehends in the present something in the object other than that which he apprehends in it in the future." This appears to contradict Aristotle, who plainly asserts in *On Memory* that "not only human beings but also certain other animals possess memory" and thus—since "only those animals which perceive time remember"—that animals perceive time.[122] This apparent contradiction can be attenuated by considering Aristotle's definition of memory, which is "neither sense-perception nor conceptualization but a state or affection of one of these, after a lapse of time."[123] Memory per se is closer to (passive) affect than to action. In the part of *Epitome of Parva Naturalia* devoted to *On Memory*, Averroes does not deny that certain animals have memory in this sense: after a lapse of time, they can remember something upon perceiving it again. But to apprehend something (again) after a time is not the same as to apprehend time. To apprehend time (which

only rational animals can do, says Averroes) is to apprehend *that there is time*—i.e., to understand the temporality of existence, to know, in the present, that there will be a future and that it may be imagined (now) in relation to the past. To apprehend time is to know, in the present, that we have time to investigate, to postulate the future by searching through the past. At any rate, following Aristotle, Averroes makes a sharp distinction between, on the one hand, memory (*memoria*), recall (*rememoratio*), and retention (*conservatio*)—which many animals, including humans, possess—and, on the other, recollection (*reminiscientia*)—which only humans possess:

> Indeed recollection (*reminiscientia*) is the *willful investigation of the intention* [*voluntaria investigatio intentionis*] that was formerly apprehended but has been forgotten. But this faculty appears to belong to humans alone, since in this sort of investigation a human puts the *cogitative faculty* [*virtutem cogitativam*] to work in order to represent [i.e., to make present again] that intention [*intentionem*] that has been effaced by forgetfulness. For it does not appear that other animals have this [faculty of] investigation, although memory is possessed by all animals that have imagination.[124]

Many animals besides humans are capable of being struck, passively, by a present *intentio* that triggers memory; but only humans are capable of actively (i.e., voluntarily) searching for intentions not currently present in order to carry out a proper investigation. Cogitation or practical reasoning ("thinking, loving, and hating"), the actual exercise of the rational power of the human soul, means apprehending the *intentio* of a present object and—at the same time—searching through (recollecting) intentions from the past in order to produce constellations of meanings, to make inferences and to deliberate concerning future intentions.[125] If one simply moves toward or away from the object presently intended, without cogitating through recollection and investigation, one is acting in the manner of a nonrational animal.

Averroes here is following in the footsteps of Ibn Bajja, who in *Governance of the Solitary*—after enumerating acts of the vegetative-nutritive soul that animals (including humans) share with plants—distinguishes between the human soul and the (nonhuman) animal soul:

> Man shares all this [i.e., the acts of the vegetative-nutritive soul] in common with the nonrational animals, and along with this he shares with them *sense, imagination, and memory* and the acts which follow from those and that constitute the *animal soul*. Humans are distinguished from all these species by the *cogitative faculty* and that which exists only through it. That is why humans also possess *recollection*, which does not belong to any other animals.[126]

It will be helpful to keep this passage in mind as we work through Stanza 3. Ibn Bajja speaks of three main types of soul, corresponding to three categories of living beings: vegetative-nutritive (plants); sensitive-imaginative-memorative (animals); cogitative-recollective (humans). As we will see, Averroes does not regard the latter two as different types of soul; rather, cogitation and recollection are the human modes of imagination and memory, and so humans and animals both have, as their highest type of soul, the sensitive-imaginative. Failure to recognize this is a primary reason why Stanza 3 has not been properly understood.

Without the power of recollection (the precondition of which is the capacity to apprehend time), there can be no cogitation and hence no human reason. The lofty nature of the status of memory as recollection is indicated by the fact that in Averroes's *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's 'De anima'* the key thematic nexus "thinking, loving, and hating" is rendered "recollecting, loving, and hating"—as if recollecting just is another name for thinking; moreover, these operations are explicitly attributed to practical reason: "By that which 'within the body perishes,' Aristotle means the imaginative forms, and by 'that which recollects, loves, and hates,' the practical intellect, which exists due to the imagination."[127] It now appears clear that there is good reason why Cavalcanti opens his account of love by immediately—in Stanza 2's opening verse (the first verse of the treatise proper)—invoking memory (*memora*; line 15). This ought to be regarded as memory in its properly human mode: as recollection.

This insistence on love's rationality is undeniably crystal clear in the philosophical texts that Cavalcanti studied. If *Donna me prega* were—as it is always said to be—a declaration of love's irrationality, this would be a strange instance of Guido's turning against the views of his Aristotelian masters. Unless one sees that Cavalcanti is not talking about animal desire (concupiscible appetite, Venus) but about human desire (will, Mars), one will stumble, with fatal consequences, in reading the canzone. Rational (as opposed to merely animal) desire, loving, involves recollection; and it is, in short, a *voluntary investigation of intentions*. This is precisely what Cavalcanti will explain in Stanza 3.

Excursus III: Mars and Irascible Desire

Medieval philosophers recognized two primary categories of emotion, both of which were conceived as modes of desire: the concupiscible and the irascible. In brief, this distinction is between movement toward an object that is pleasant and easily obtainable (concupiscible desire), on the one hand, and movement toward an object that is useful and difficult to obtain (irascible desire), on the other.[128] A person motivated by irascibility undertakes something that, although difficult, arduous, and currently unpleasant, is pleasant in the long run: the person aims to obtain

an object that is ultimately more pleasant than the immediately and easily obtainable pleasant object. Irascibility should not be confused with anger. In fact, one of the most exemplary irascible emotions is hope: a person who refuses to settle for an alternative that is second best, hoping instead eventually to obtain the best, is motivated by irascible desire, which involves those crucial elements of temporal foresight, of choosing between different imagined outcomes, and of willingness to defer immediately present pleasure that are, for Averroes, the essential constituents of practical reason.

In the Middle Ages, Mars was the god of irascible desire and Venus the goddess of concupiscible desire. Albertus Magnus remarks that according to astrological accounts of the influences of the various planetary spheres on the human soul, "in the sphere of Mars [the soul receives] irascibility, . . . and in Venus's sphere concupiscence."[129] This distinction is the medieval version of Plato's, in *Republic*, between the middle part of the soul, known as spirit (*thumos*), and the brutish lower part of the soul, known as appetite (*epithumia*).

By far the most influential account was Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, a work that was extremely popular in the Middle Ages. There *thumos* (irascible desire) and *epithumia* (concupiscible desire) are linked, respectively, with Mars and Venus:

> By the impulse of the first weight the soul, having started on its downward course from the intersection of the zodiac and the Milky Way to the successive spheres lying beneath, as it passes through these spheres, not only takes on the aforementioned envelopment in each sphere by approaching a luminous body, but also acquires each of the attributes which it will exercise later. In the sphere of Saturn it obtains reason and understanding, called *logistikon* and *theoretikon*; in Jupiter's sphere, the power to act, called *praktikon*; in Mars' sphere, a bold spirit or *thumikon*; in the Sun's sphere, sense-perception and imagination, *aisthetikon* and *phantasikon*; in Venus's sphere, the impulse of passion, *epithumetikon*; in Mercury's sphere, the ability to speak and interpret, *hermeneutikon*; and in the lunar sphere, the function of molding and increasing bodies, *phutikon*.[130]

We can now say with confidence that Cavalcanti, speaking figurally or mythologically, identifies the loving attribute that the human soul acquires in the fifth planetary sphere, the "darkness/that comes from Mars" (*scuritate/la qual da Marte vène*; line 18), as the bold spirit—i.e., irascible desire.[131] Plato's *thumos*, the forerunner of the medieval irascible power, is quasi-rational, whereas *epithumia*, appetite (associated in Macrobius, as "passion," with Venus), is in no way rational.[132] Plato's spirit is the motivation for military glory and political victory. It is the

part of the soul that moves a person to fight—that is, to risk suffering and pain in the short term in the hope of obtaining a desirable and pleasurable outcome in the long term. Cavalcanti associates love with Mars because Mars stands for a motivating power that is relatively rational and that, by comparing the image of a difficult-to-obtain future pleasure with the image of a pleasure easy to obtain at once, chooses to pursue the former. Such a motivating desire exemplifies the operation of practical reason as understood by Averroes. Strange as it may sound, war (Mars) is in a certain sense the very essence of rationality, since it involves a willingness to suffer now for the sake of an imagined better future. As Albertus Magnus puts it, "arduum et altum . . . proprium objectum est irascibilis" ("the arduous and lofty is the proper object of the irascible" (note the *altum* here: this is line 3's *altero*).[133] Love is not just desire (and certainly not lust or animal appetite) but rather desire for the difficult or arduous—a willingness to defer the enjoyment of pleasure: irascible desire.[134] Loving is a cogitating that, sorting through images/intentions, compares them and chooses the one currently most painful as the one ultimately most pleasurable. This is the *fin amor* of the Occitan troubadour tradition, which meets in Cavalcanti its Averroist-Aristotelian theoretician.

Here a few brief remarks regarding a diagram printed in a sixteenth-century edition of Averroes's Long Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* (purportedly a facsimile drawn from a thirteenth-century Latin manuscript[135]) will help confirm and clarify the Averroist association between irascible desire and rationality. Something of a confused hodge-podge, inspired by similar diagrams from manuscripts of Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (and including, as in the Macrobius manuscripts, various Pythagorean elements), the diagram presents eight concentric circles representing the eight planetary spheres. Three of the four quadrants are inscribed with ordered rankings: in the lower right the planetary spheres are identified; in the upper right is the hierarchy of the powers of the human soul; in the upper left is the ontological hierarchy of the created universe. For the reader's convenience, I present this material in the form of a table:

Planetary spheres	*Ontological order*	*Powers of the soul*
Eighth Sphere:	Substantiarum separatarum intellectio	Intellectiva animae pars
Saturn:	Rationalium	Irascitiva
Jupiter:	Motivorum secundum locum	Appetitiva
Mars:	Sensitivorum	Memorativa
Sun:	Vegetabilium	Aestimativa
Venus:	Misturarum inanimatorum	Imaginativa
Mercury:	Misturarum imperfectorum	Sensus communis
Moon:	Elementorum	Sensus particularis

The ranks or levels of the ontological order, from lowest to highest, are the following: the four elements (earth, air, fire, water); imperfect mixtures (of the four elements; i.e., aggregations of contiguous matter that do not amount to substances); inanimate mixtures (i.e., nonliving physical substances); plants; lower-order animals (having the power of sense-perception but not locomotion); higher-order animals (having the power of sense-perception along with locomotion); the rational animal; separate substances (i.e., Intelligences). The powers of the soul, as ranked here, may be conceived of as three groupings. Lowest are the five external senses (vision, hearing, touch, taste, smell), which were often called the "particular senses"; these are all included together on the level designated by the Moon. The middle grouping (extending from the level of Mercury to that of Mars) includes the four internal senses: the *sensus communis* (which perceives the data provided by the various particular senses as a unified whole); imagination (which takes what we might call a snapshot of that unified whole, such that it is perceptible even in the absence of the external perceived object); estimation (which can abstract various sorts of meaning from that snapshot); memory (which can retrieve those various meanings and recombine them in various ways). The powers of the upper grouping (from Jupiter to the Eighth Sphere) are no longer powers of sensation but rather powers of desiring[136] (appetitive desire, on the level of Jupiter; irascible desire, on the level of Saturn) and understanding (intellection, on the level of the Eighth Sphere).

From an Averroist point of view, there is something extraordinary going on here. Recall that for Averroes there is no intellective part of the soul; hence we can bracket and disregard the *intellectiva animae pars*. (Since in the diagram this is the power correlated with intellection of the separate substances [*substantiarum separatarum intellectio*], we are not at liberty to suggest that this *pars intellectiva* might accommodate practical intellect, which has no power for intellecting separate substances.) Recall as well that Averroes, having said farewell to *nous/intellectus*, regards *logos/ratio* as the highest human power. But in this ranking of the desiring and thinking powers of soul, *ratio* is nowhere to be found. More precisely, *ratio is* found, but it is named *irascitiva*, correlated in the ontological order with the rational animal! There is no place for the rationality of the rational animal—no place *other than the place of (irascible) desire*. One can define man, interchangeably, as the rational animal or as *the irascible animal*.[137]

Stanza 3 (a) qual sia sua vertute (lines 29–31)

The usual and never disputed account of *Donna me prega*'s content—that love is irrational and poses a potentially deadly threat—is based on the misreading of Stanza 3. In truth, the stanza gives an account of love as *rational potential* and of loving as the act or perfection of that potential. This will become clear as we proceed.

Stanza 3 addresses the topics announced in line 11: *qual sia sua vertute e sua potenza* ("what [love's] power is and its potency/faculty"). Although in medieval Latin Aristotelianism *virtus* and *potentia* can function as interchangeable terms, they sometimes name the distinction (which will be explained below) between "power" and "faculty." The stanza's first section (lines 29–31) is a psychological treatment of love's virtue and power in terms of physics; the second (lines 32–42) treats love's virtue and potency in terms of physics and ethics: its potential and actual operation in human life.

Love is not a *virtus* (*non è vertute*; line 29): it is not a power of the soul. As we will see, loving is choosing through exercising the cogitative (= rational) faculty, from which it cannot be regarded as separate. But love does come from a power of soul that is a perfection: *da quella vène/ ch'è perfezione* ("it comes from that [power of soul] that is [a] perfection"; lines 29–30). A perfection in this sense (there is a related sense of perfection, relevant to line 39's *perfetto*, which we will discuss below) is the highest and noblest in a hierarchy of powers.

Love comes from a *virtus* that is "not the rational, I say, but [the one] that senses" (*non razionale, ma che sente, dico*; line 31). Does this not mean, obviously, that love is "not rational" (*non razionale*)? This objection—which is immediately suspect, since it amounts to saying that the sensitive not the rational power is the human perfection ("Love is not a power but comes from that power that is the perfection of the human species: I mean to say the sensitive not the rational power") and thus that the rational animal does not possess the rational faculty (an absurd philosophical blunder that neither Cavalcanti nor Averroes would have ever have committed)—can be thoroughly dispelled by taking into account the texts that Cavalcanti studied.

The *che si pone tale* ("for so it is posited," "for it is designated such"; line 30) gives us a clue. Our perfection is assigned—by convention—the name "sensitive" rather than "rational." With the *si pone tale* Cavalcanti indicates that we are in the realm of the "so to speak": loosely speaking, we can call the power of soul that possesses the highest human faculty—the power that is our perfection—the sensitive power; and perhaps we should avoid calling it the rational power, since doing so might give those who speak loosely the wrong idea.

Loosely speaking, there are three types of soul—corresponding to the souls of plants, animals, and humans: the vegetative, the sensitive, and the rational. Taking into account their operations, these three can be somewhat more precisely termed the vegetative-nutritive, the sensitive-imaginative, and the rational-intellective. A non-Averroist, one who asserts that the rational animal is both rational (capable of practical reasoning) and intellective (capable of intellecting), might well be content with this scheme. But recall that Averroes aims to disambiguate "rational," to separate out its two types, *ratio* (*logos*) and *intellectus* (*nous*).

Humans possess the former power of reason (which one can call, loosely, practical intellect) but not an intellective power. Where, then, is the place of this human *ratio*? Once we have denied humans an intellective faculty, are we simply left with a slight variation on the three types of soul: the vegetative-nutritive, the sensitive-imaginative, and the rational? Averroes prefers not to speak as if there were a third type of soul—namely, the rational. Rather, he regards our rationality as a mode of imagination (more precisely: as an operation carried out in association with imagination) and hence as a faculty of the sensitive-imaginative power of soul. Detached from Intellect, *ratio* is bound up with the animal (sensitive-imaginative) soul. The perfection of humans as human is indeed the rational (= cogitative) faculty. But that faculty is rational not intellective: it operates with images and thus belongs to the sensitive-imaginative soul, not to the so-called rational ("intellective") soul—for in fact there is no such thing as intellective soul. In brief, reason is a specifically human faculty of the sensitive power of soul.[138] Lines 29–31 are perfectly clear: love comes from the highest faculty of the sensitive-imaginative soul—the rational faculty. Line 31's *non razionale* does not mean that *love* is not rational; it means that rationality belongs to the sensitive *not to the (so-called) rational* soul; it means that "rational" is not the right name for the power of soul of which rationality is the highest faculty and the perfection.

A passage from Averroes's *LC* confirms the validity of our approach:

> What [Aristotle] said concerning the practical intellect should be understood concerning the imagination, for animals universally are moved by imagination. If, therefore, form [*forma*; see line 21: love "comes from a seen form that is imagined/intended"] is imagined on the basis of cogitation, then motion will be ascribed to the practical intellect [i.e., to human reason]. If it is not on the basis of cogitation, then it will be ascribed to the imaginative power itself.[139]

Averroes is saying that all animal motions, including the motions of practical intellect (i.e., human reason), are motions of the sensitive-imaginative soul, of the *vertute . . . che sente* ("the sensitive . . . power"; lines 29–31). *Donna me prega* has never been properly understood because lines 29–31 have always been misunderstood, erroneously taken to mean that love belongs to the sensitive not the rational soul and so is irrational. But *there is no rational soul*; rationality is a mode of imagination (which is itself a kind of sensation). "Not rational" (*non razionale*; line 31) does not mean that *love* is sensitive-imaginative rather than rational (i.e., that love is irrational); it means that the perfection of the human soul is *conventionally called the sensitive not the rational* type of soul. The sensitive power is a "so-called" (*si pone tale*; line 30) perfection, although in humans the perfection of the sensitive soul is the rational faculty.[140]

A somewhat more technical analysis will provide invaluable clarification of the structure and meaning of Stanza 3, absolutely central to the valid interpretation of *Donna me prega*. We will see that line 35's phrase *di sua potenza*—the misinterpretation of which has led to the egregious reversal of the canzone's actual meaning—cannot mean "from love's power" but must mean "from the sensitive-imaginative soul's power."

Recall that Stanza 3 is meant to explain *qual sia sua vertute e sua potenza* ("what [love's] *vertute* and its *potenza* is"; line 11). The corresponding Latin terms, *virtus* and *potentia*, can both be translated "power." Yet there must be a distinction between the two, since a poet of Cavalcanti's caliber would not proudly proclaim that he will show "what love's power and its power is." Still, the singular verb "is" (*sia*) makes us question whether these are two distinct elements, love's *virtus* and love's *potentia*. Perhaps these are distinct only as two facets of the same thing? This uncertainty is itself a calculated poetic effect, since Cavalcanti is here implicating the difficulty of speaking about differences within what is, after all, one thing—the soul.

In *LC* Averroes discusses precisely this equivocality concerning the powers of soul, explaining that there are two different psychological meanings of "potency":

> Potency [*potentia*] . . . is said in an equivocal way. . . . [There is] the potency which is the first actuality [*prima perfectio* = Aristotle's 'first entelechy'] and the potency which is not the soul in its own being [*non est anima in suo esse*].[141]

The first meaning of the power or potency of the soul is that which applies in Aristotle's famous definition of the soul as "an actuality/entelechy of the first kind of an [organized] natural body having life potentially in it [*prima perfectio corporis naturalis habentis vitam in potentia*]."[142] This is best explained with an example. A lifeless (not dead, merely lifeless) human body (if there were such a thing) is potentially alive until it is actually alive. The soul is the principle of that body's actual vivification, the cause of that moment after which the lifeless body is a living human; it is, further, the underlying principle of that living human's movements and development. *Potentia* in the first of the two equivocal meanings involves this general, underlying or overarching, notion of power and is in effect a name for the actuality of "the soul in its own being" [*anima in suo esse*]. Now, power in this sense is not restricted to the soul as a whole; we can also speak in this way of the "powers" of the soul—general categories of the soul's functioning and (for want of better terms) types or kinds of soul. If one were to speak, very loosely, of the "plant power" of soul, or of its "animal power" or "human power," employing *potentia* for this purpose would still fall within the scope of the first of that term's two equivocal meanings. In real practice, Aristotelians do

speak of the power of sensation, the power of locomotion, the power of growth, etc., where "power" is employed in this first, general and essential, sense. But in *LC* these general categories of soul power are not normally called potencies; the term used for a power such as this is *virtus* (Cavalcanti's *vertute*; line 29; line 11). Thus, for example, we find the following: "And we name the powers [*virtutes*] nutritive, sensitive, desiderative, locomotive, and discerning."[143] We see, then, that for Cavalcanti there *is* a distinction between *vertute* (*virtus*) and *potenza* (*potentia*). Line 29's "[Love] is not a power" (*non è vertute*) is referring to power of soul in this sense—accordingly, Guido employs the proper term, *virtus*.

Regarding the second of the two equivocal meanings of *potentia*, potency that is not the soul in its own being [*potentia que non est anima in suo esse*], Averroes elucidates this by expanding on examples given by Aristotle:

> [Aristotle then] began to show by example the difference between the first and the second actuality [*inter primam perfectionem . . . et secundam*] in things having forms. He said: "And just as cutting and seeing, etc." That is, just as cutting in the axe and seeing in the eye are final actualities [*postreme perfectiones*] of those things, so too wakefulness is the final actuality [*postrema perfectio*] of a sensitive animal. He said this because it is clear that the relation of cutting to the instrument when it cuts and of vision to the eye when it sees is just as the relation of the action of the senses to the animal while awake. For wakefulness is the *use* [emphasis added] of the senses. . . . [A power in this sense of the term] is called potency [*potentia*] because sometimes it acts and sometimes it does not. It is also called potency at the time in which it is not acting.[144]

Whereas *virtus* (power) designates the essence and existence of the soul or a general category of soul (what it is and the fact that it is), *potentia* refers to the things that power can *do*. Because those things are several and variable, a power normally possesses a plurality of potencies (faculties) that may differ from one species to another within a genus. For example, the sensitive power of a species may possess the faculties of vision, touch, hearing, etc., including faculties of internal sensation such as the common sense and imagination; yet the sensitive power (*virtus*) of soul in some animal species does not include the potency (faculty) of, for instance, vision. When a potency is in use in such a way that it achieves the *telos* or aim of a power, it is a final actuality (*postrema perfectio*). For a power with a plurality of faculties, this *telos* is only achieved when the noblest of those faculties (usually in cooperation with the others) is in use. In Stanza 3, Cavalcanti tells us, with terminological precision and coherence, that for humans loving is the final actuality (*postrema perfectio*: *buon perfetto*; line 39) of the sensitive power (*virtus*: *vertute*,

line 29; "the power . . . that senses" [*vertute . . . che sente*], lines 29–31) of soul: it comes to exist as such when that power's cogitative faculty (*potentia*: *potenza*; line 35)—a faculty (unique to the rational animal) of the sensitive power of soul—is actually not potentially in use.[145] The antecedent of line 35's possessive pronoun (*sua*, "its") is the sensitive power of soul, *not* love!

Stanza 3 (b) e sua potenza (lines 32–42)

The rest of Stanza 3 is grounded in Aristotle's discussion, in *Metaphysics*, of the distinction between rational and nonrational powers. As we move forward, we should recall the error that can only result in nonsensical and incoherent readings: assuming without reflection that the antecedent of the (sometimes implied) subject pronoun "it" (or also, in this stanza, of the possessive pronoun "its") is love. As we saw earlier, Stanza 2, incontrovertibly, is unreadable unless we grant that "it" refers to various subjects (namely, love, the *intentio*, and the Possible Intellect); moreover, following that stanza's midpoint (line 21), "it" *never once means love*. The same principle holds true (and why should it not?) for Stanza 3—and to an even greater degree, since *only* in the stanza's first verse (line 29) does "it" mean love. The immense tradition of misreading *Donna me prega* has above all been caused by the unfounded presumption that "it"/"its" means love in these two key verses: "It [i.e., love] keeps [*mantene*] judgment unhealthy" (line 32); "From its [i.e., love's] potency [*potenza*] death often follows" (line 35). Most misinterpretations of any given detail of the canzone are in effect metastases spread from these malignant interpretations of the poem's central verses. For, as we will see presently, unhealthy judgment and possible death are *not* caused by love but rather by *not loving*.

32 For di salute — giudicar mantene
ché la 'ntenzione — per ragione — vale:
discerne male — in cui è vizio amico.
35 Di sua potenza segue spesso morte,
se forte — la vertù fosse impedita,
la quale aita — la contraria via:

The antecedent of the implied subject pronoun "it" ("[It] maintains [*mantene*] judgment in an unhealthy state" [line 32]) is the power that is said to be (*si pone tale*: "so it is posited"; line 30) a perfection, mentioned in the previous verses (lines 29–31): the so-called sensitive[-imaginative] soul (so-called, because this is the name philosophers have settled on, although in humans that power of soul includes rational faculties such as recollection and cogitation). In a person habituated to vice (*in cui è vizio amico*: "in whom vice is a friend"; line 34), the sensitive-imaginative

soul ("it") maintains the faculty of judging/discerning (*giudicar*, line 32; *discerne*, line 34) in an unhealthy state, a condition of illness: *for di salute* ("outside of health"; line 32). It does so to the degree that, as in nonrational animals, the imaginative faculty reaches its limit with the present *intentio* (*'ntenzione*, line 33) and is not aided (*aita*; line 37) by an investigation that would submit that *intentio* to the judgment of *ragione* (line 33), to "discerning, loving and hating." When the sensitive-imaginative soul operates on its own, without benefit or proper use of those rational faculties that belong only to humans, then human cogitating (judging, choosing, discerning from among multiple images/intentions) does not operate healthily. To prevent illness and sometimes "death" (a metaphorical death, as we will see), two powers ought to be functioning properly: a faculty—imagination, the production of intentions—of the sensitive-imaginative soul shared by many animals including humans and a faculty of that power of soul possessed solely by humans, the rational/cogitative. This latter is the *vertù . . . la quale aita la contraria via*—"the power that favors/supports/sustains [*aita: aiutare*] the opposite way" (lines 36–37). The unimpeded operation of this power/*virtus* leads in a direction contrary (*contraria*) to illness and death: its outcome is health and life. The rational power, for its part, does not work alone; rather, in a specifically human manner involving recollection and loving ("thinking/recollecting, loving, and hating"), it works in tandem with the generically animal power of imagination: loving "comes from" (line 29) the sensitive-imaginative power (which provides images/intentions), but it is an operation involving both the imaginative and rational powers.[146]

It is no accident that Cavalcanti presents rational action as the outcome of an act of judging (*giudicar*; line 32): judging is precisely the act of cogitating through imagining and recollecting. In his *Epitome of Parva naturalia*, Averroes, emphasizing that cogitation is the act of judging—discerning and choosing—shows that rational judgment involves four powers, faculties or potencies—two of which (sense-perception and imagination) are generically animal powers of the sensitive-imaginative soul, the other two being specifically human (i.e., rational) faculties "associated with imagination in its action." (This association is the reason why, with Averroes, Cavalcanti is willing to assign *ratio* not to the rational [*non razionale*, line 31] soul but to the soul *che sente* ["that senses"; line 31]: the sensitive-imaginative soul.) Although cogitation/recollection's power is that of a faculty that is "neither sense nor imagination" (*virtutis non sensus neque ymaginatio illa est*),[147] it is so closely allied with those two that it is to be reckoned as a faculty of the type of soul that bears their names:

> Although it is not identical with imagination, it is nevertheless associated with imagination in its action. We say that although each

> act of memory and recollection will occur only through imagination, nevertheless the *intentio* of recollection is different from the *intentio* of imagination, and [we say] that the actions of these two faculties [i.e., imagination and recollection/cogitation] are different from each other. For the function of recollection is to treat an *intentio* of imagination as still present even after it has disappeared and to pass judgment [*iudicare*] upon it presently. . . . There are, therefore, four things involved: the image [i.e., the internally imaged sense-perception]; the *intentio* of that image; the treatment of that *intentio* as still present; and the passing of judgment [*iudicare*]. . . . This faculty (i.e., memory) functions in humans through reasoning and deliberation, and therefore humans can recollect, whereas in other animals it is a nature, and therefore the animal will be able to remember but not to recollect.[148]

The first two of the "four things involved" are the image, which is the internal imprint of the sense-perceptible material form of an apprehended object, and the *intentio* of that image, which is both that image as preserved so as to be perceptible in the absence of the object as well as elements of the image that we might call its "meaning"; in this case, involving a sense-perception that took place in the past, this *intentio* is in effect a stored meaning. The first two things involve faculties of the sensitive-imaginative soul that humans share with many other animal species and thus belong to the sensitive-imaginative soul as such: sense-perception and imagination. The latter two of the four things involved are recollection, which is treating the *intentio* of an object apprehended in the past as still present (i.e., the capacity to search through an inventory of images of absent objects so as to call them to mind presently) and the passing of judgment (*iudicare*) after deliberation. These latter two are uniquely human and are bound up with each other in the nexus that is *ratio*: "thinking/discerning [i.e., recollecting], loving and hating [i.e., judging]."

There are several key notions that run through Stanza 3 and that stand out in the verses we are presently glossing: judging/discerning (*giudicar*, line 32; *discerne*, line 34); power/potency/faculty (*vertute*, line 29; *potenza*, line 35; *vertù*, line 36); illness and health (*for di salute*, line 32); life (*vita*, line 40) and death (*morte*, line 35); imagination (*intentio*, line 33) and reason (*ragione*, line 33); and—perhaps above all, for the purposes of confirming our interpretation: *contrary outcomes* (*la contraria via*, line 37). These notions are bound up together in the passages that we will discuss presently.

Recall that Averroes argues that only humans have contrary desires for the same object at the same time:

> Some desires are *contrary* to others, this occurring when there are opposite desires for the same thing. This sort of *contrariety* occurs

> to an animal who apprehends time—namely, a rational animal—for [such an animal] apprehends in the present something in the object other than that which he apprehends in it in the future. For example, it apprehends that the object is pleasant now, but injurious in the future. It is the appetitive faculty which moves toward present pleasure and the [practical] intellect [i.e., the cogitative power] which judges its future harm.[149]

Recollection is not just remembering—it is more generally the ability to apprehend intentions temporally. So, while presently apprehending an object, the rational animal can also apprehend it in the future. It is this capacity to locate, simultaneously, a presently intended object in the past, present, and future that enables humans alone to have two contrary desires for the same object (and thus to have the rational power of choice). For only humans can cogitate: they can compare and choose from different temporally marked images of the same object.

One of the keys to understanding Stanza 3 is Aristotle's distinction, in *Metaphysics*, between nonrational and rational powers; the former do not allow for a *contraria via* (line 37), while the latter do:

> It is necessary in the case of nonrational powers that when an agent and a patient are brought together the action and affect take place, whereas in the case of rational powers this is not necessary; for every one of the nonrational powers can have but a single effect, whereas *the rational can have contrary effects*, so that if they were under the same necessity as are the nonrational they would have *contrary effects* at the same time. But this is impossible. It is necessary, accordingly, that something else be decisive in rational action; I mean *desire* [*oresis*] or deliberate choice [*prohaeresis*, *praevoluntas*]. For whatever alternative a rational being *desires decisively*, that he will do whenever he is capable of acting and when he is brought into connection with the chosen object to be acted upon. Consequently, every being which has a rational power must, when it has the *desire*, do what it has power to do and in the way in which it has it. . . . Nor need we add *the proviso that there be no external hindrance*; for what has power has the power of acting, and it has this, not in all circumstances, but in those circumstances in which external hindrances are by definition excluded. Hence, even if one were to *wish or desire* to do *two incompatible things* at the same time, one would not do them; for no one has such a power.[150]

Only rational powers are capable of producing contrary outcomes. Yet a rational power would produce no outcome at all were it not for its power of desire—for, faced with multiple paths of action, it would not choose if it were not able to love. What Aristotle calls here "desiring decisively" and what marks a power as rational rather than nonrational is what

Averroes and Cavalcanti call "loving." This is the uniquely human mode of desire, which is distinguished by the power to decide, to choose this rather than that.

In his *Epitome on Aristotle's Metaphysics* Averroes, following Aristotle, gives the example of illness and health to which Cavalcanti alludes in Stanza 3 (*for di salute*, "unhealthy"; line 32). Rational powers can achieve what they are meant to achieve (they can attain their *telos* or essential aim), yet they can also achieve the opposite (the *contraria via*; line 37). Physicians, for instance, have the power to make their patients ill (to the point, we might add, of causing their death [*morte*; line 35]):

> Those potencies which are *nonrational and not dependent on desire* are characterized by the fact that they produce by themselves *only one of two contrary effects*, e.g. the hot can heat and the cold can cool, yet they have no *potency* [see line 35: *potenza*] other than producing *one of these contraries*. . . . As for those *potencies which act by desire and will* [i.e., rational potencies], these include *the potency to produce any contrary effects whatsoever.* This is why in the productive arts the cognition of *contraries* is part of one and the same knowledge (e.g. the art of healing includes the knowledge of *both health and illness*), except that the *knowledge of one of the contraries is what they essentially aim at*. . . . For these arts do not aim at producing both *contraries* (e.g. the art of healing knows illness not in order to produce it, *but it knows health in order to produce and preserve it*).[151]

In the case of the faculty of cogitation, the analogy to the bad doctor's producing illness is the rational animal's pursuing the *intentio* (*'ntenzione*; line 33) immediately without using reason (*ragione*; line 33) to carry out an investigation followed by a judgment (*giudicar*; line 32). A healthy judgment is not the cold analysis of objective reason; rather, it is the decision/choice that is virtually synonymous with desire/will/love:

> A further characteristic of the natural [i.e., nonrational] potencies consists in the fact that as soon as they meet their natural patient, they act on it by necessity (as fire ignites wood necessarily as soon as it meets it). That which acts by *desire and will* [i.e., rational potencies], on the other hand, does not have to act by necessity as soon as it meets its patient. For, if that were the case, it would produce *contrary effects* at the same time, since it is its nature to be capable of producing either or of refraining from producing anything at all. From this it is evident that that which decides in favor of one of the two acts producing contrary effects must be another potency, namely the one called "desire" and "will" when this potency is in contact with the potency of imagination, according to what has been shown in the book "On the Soul."[152]

The "faculty . . . that supports the opposite way" (lines 36–37) is "the one called 'desire' and 'will'." Rational action is produced through the cooperation of two faculties: imagination and what Averroes—abbreviating the nexus "thinking/recollection, loving, and hating"—here calls desire and will (i.e., love). Imagination and reason are not opponents, but rather they work in tandem; thus line 37 tells us that the rational faculty *aids* (*aita*) the imaginative faculty. Cavalcanti does not characterize *ragione* (line 33) as a faculty contrary to imagination (i.e., contrary to the faculty that presents the *'intenzione* ([line 33]) but as a faculty able to produce contraries—that is, as a rational potency. In healthy judgment, the relation between imagination and reason is not antagonistic. In fact, reason (cogitation) *is* imagination in its human mode, as Averroes insists in his *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's 'De anima'*:

> Every desire . . . is not free of imagination, since the imaginative form [i.e., the *intentio*] which moves everything imagined occurs because of either perception or cogitation. That which occurs due to cogitation belongs to man, while that which occurs due to perception belongs to the other animals also.[153]

Reason ("the faculty that supports the opposite way"; lines 36–37) is not the contrary of some deleterious faculty that leads away from reason; rather, reason itself, as a rational power, has the power to lead to illness and death as well as the power to lead the opposite way, to health and life. "Death often follows" *(segue spesso morte*; line 35) from the potency (*potenza*; line 35) of the faculty of imagination (the highest faculty of the generically animal sensitive-imaginative soul) when that potency is not "in contact with" (see Averroes, just mentioned earlier) the cogitative/loving faculty—the "one called 'desire' and 'will'." In that case, the rational power will have failed, like a doctor who makes his patients ill. Rather than leading to *the one of the two contraries that it essentially aims at* (i.e., life), the rational power will have produced "death" (*morte*; line 35). *Donna me prega* (line 35) does not say that death often follows from love's power; it says that death often follows from the rational power, when that power leads to the contrary opposite the one that it essentially aims at (lines 36–37). Imagination itself is innocent: the blame falls upon reason's failure to make contact—which failure moves one to pursue a *via* that is *contraria* to health and life. It is not love but the failure to love that leads to ethical illness and death.[154]

Only rational powers can fail. In the case of the cogitative faculty, failing means not carrying out the investigation, not searching through an inventory of (past, present, and future) intentions. This is a failure regardless whether the action might be considered good in itself. The failure of rationality is not that one chooses to pursue a wrong/bad *intentio*; rather, it is refraining from judging, failing to submit the *intentio* to inquisition. One can, as an animal, perform what might seem to be a

good action. But, regardless of what that action is, it is not in fact good unless it has been chosen through cogitation.[155] Faced with a present *intentio*, one can pursue it immediately—just as would animal appetite. This same action becomes an ethical one in humans if and only if it has been decided on through loving.

The rest of Stanza 3 is straightforward. Cavalcanti clarifies what is meant by "death" (*morte*) by indicating the authentic meaning of "life"; he insists that the rational faculty of soul is "natural"—i.e., mortal; he celebrates cogitation in act (the final actuality/perfection of the potential for loving) as the highest human good and happiness (the *buon perfetto*; line 39); he adds the proviso (mentioned by Aristotle) concerning external hindrances; and he valorizes rationality in act over rationality as potential.

35 Di sua potenza segue spesso morte,
se forte — la vertù fosse impedita,
la quale aita — la contraria via
38 non perché oppost'a naturale sia:
ma, quanto che da buon perfetto tort'è
per sorte, — non pò dire om ch'aggia vita,
ché stabilita — non ha segnoria.
42 A simil pò valer quand'om l'oblia.

In line 35—which is always misread, thus ruining any chance of understanding *Donna me prega*—Cavalcanti tells us that the power of the sensitive-imaginative soul (in this case, the faculty of imagination) can often lead to death: *di sua potenza segue spesso morte* ("death is often the outcome of its potency" [i.e., the outcome of pursuing the *via*, contrary to the rational way, that is mapped out solely by the generically animal faculty of imagination]; line 35). When the imaginative power works alone, without the cogitative faculty operating by performing its essential act of loving, then one cannot be said to be living a human life, since one is not exercising one's specifically rational *virtus*.

The lines that follow make it clear that the "death" to which Cavalcanti is here referring is not death in the literal, physical sense. Literally speaking, death will happen, always. By no means does *Donna me prega* say that love causes, or even has any contributing influence on, human mortality, and there is nothing to suggest that the ultimate destiny of body and soul is anything other than death. As many modern commentators recognize, the "death" at issue here is ethical death. A human life lived in accordance with the impulses of *intentio* rather than the judgments of *ratio* cannot really be called a human life: as Guido says (lines 40–41) such "a man cannot say that he is alive, for he has not established mastery" over the intentions of the imagination. Cavalcanti is no doubt thinking of the passage in *Nicomachean Ethics* in which Aristotle characterizes

practical reason as the specifically human attribute, the element that sets us apart from animals. Posing the question concerning the essence of the "good life" (= happiness) for man—this is the *buon perfetto* ("perfect good") of line 39—Aristotle answers that the properly human life is the rational life in the ethical sense:

> So whatever, then, would this [human life] be? For living appears to be something common even to plants, but what is peculiar to human beings is being sought. One must set aside, then, the life characterized by nutrition as well as growth. A certain life characterized by sense perception would be next, but it too appears to be common to a horse and cow and in fact to every animal. So there remains a certain active life of that which possesses reason.[156]

If for Aristotle man is the rational animal, this does not mean that we all have a natural capacity for *theoria* or knowledge in the strict sense, but rather that we all have a natural capacity for rational *praxis*. When human rationality reverts to animal intentionality (when *la 'ntenzione per ragione vale* ["the *intentio* equates to reason"]; line 33), then the rational animal is merely an animal, the faculty of judgment (*giudicar*) is unhealthy (*for di salute*; line 32), and death often follows (*segue spesso morte*; line 35)—since one cannot say of such a man that he is alive (*non pò dire* [of such a] *om ch'aggia vita*).

Line 38, "not because it is opposed to the natural" (*non perché oppost'a naturale sia*), is often taken to mean that *love* ("it")—reduced to desire for sexual intercourse—is not "opposed to the natural."[157] But there are problems with this reading—not the least being that it is contradicted in the next stanza, when Cavalcanti says that love's being (*essere*) is when "the will is such that it turns beyond the limit of nature" (*L'essere è quando lo voler è tanto/ch'oltra misura di natura torna*; lines 43–44). If love is *in essence* a desire that exceeds the bounds of nature, how can Cavalcanti also teach that love is "not opposed to the natural"? This problem vanishes for us, since we have recognized that the antecedent of the implied pronoun "it" in line 38 is *not* love but rather "the faculty that furthers the contrary way" (lines 36–37)—i.e., practical reason. Reason, says Cavalcanti, furthers or aids (*aita*) life (death's contrary)—*but not because reason (i.e., cogitation, "thinking, loving, hating") is opposed to the natural*. Here Guido is using the term "natural" in its precise philosophical sense: something is natural if it is subject to the physical law of generation and corruption; the natural has a *natura*, a temporal birth or event of generation, and everything with a birth has also a death. The rational/loving faculty (i.e., "the one called 'desire' and 'will'" [Averroes])—peculiar to humans alone and their specific difference or essence—like all the natural faculties, is corruptible, subject to the law of nature which is the law of death. Cavalcanti is explaining

that reason/loving (cogitation) leads to life, but not because the faculty of reason is itself "opposed to the natural"—i.e., immortal. Rationality, for Cavalcanti as for Averroes, does not confer permanent survival: the faculty of reason, which leads to life, does not escape death. Again, the "life" to which reason leads is human life in an ethical sense, the perfection of the human sensitive-imaginative soul, the *buon perfetto* for humans; it is not eternal life or supernatural salvation.

Let us complete our gloss of Stanza 3 with a paraphrase of lines 35–42. The *per sorte* of line 40 means "perchance," "by fate," "by destiny." Cavalcanti is discussing the impediments to actual rationality (i.e., to the *buon perfetto*; line 39). He adds the proviso ("that there be no external hindrance"—i.e., no impediment) that Aristotle (himself adding it) says is not necessary to add: some humans are irrational as a matter of fate or destiny—i.e., they are born defective, with some impediment (line 36: *impedita*, "impeded"), lacking the potential for reason and hence unable to attain to actual rational practice. In line 42 Guido says that others, although born with a healthy faculty of reason, "forget" (*oblia*) to exercise that faculty, failing to develop their rational potential into rational actuality, and thus they are similar to those who are born defective. The human species in general is potentially rational, but not all individual humans become actually rational—for reasons having to do with both nature and nurture. Thus, lines 35–42 say the following:

> Death (nonrational non-life) often follows from the power of the sensitive-imaginative soul, if perchance that power's faculty of reason (which leads the contrary way—namely to a rational authentically human life) is impeded. I say that the faculty of reason leads to 'life' not because that faculty is immortal, but because I am speaking of 'life' in a metaphorical sense: one cannot say that a man whom fate of birth has turned away from the perfect good—that is, from actual rationality—is truly alive, since he has not established mastery over his intentions. The same thing holds for a man who, although born with potential reason, fails to actualize that potential.

In sum, Stanza 3 is the stanza of ethics. The topic of ethics is happiness, the highest good, the complete actualization of potential, felicity, beatitude, the *buon perfetto* (line 39). Cavalcanti insists that the *buon perfetto* of human life is practical reason—a life guided by thinking, loving, and hating. Our perfection/happiness (the end which humans have the potency to attain) is, since it is natural (generable and corruptible), not eternal life. Moreover, it is not theoretical knowledge but rather ethical practice.[158] Cavalcanti once again shows himself in accord

with an authentic Averroism, for it was Averroes himself who formulated this thoroughly pragmatic position:

> Human *perfection*/completion [i.e., the *buon perfetto* that is the aim of Aristotelian ethics] is achieved only in social life and this in turn is achieved only through moral virtue: thus it is necessary that humans be good, although it is not necessary that they know the truth.[159]

Stanza 4

L'essere è quando — lo voler è tanto
ch'oltra misura — di natura — torna:
poi non s'adorna — di riposo mai,
Move, cangiando — color, riso in pianto,
e la figura — con la paura — storna.
Poco soggiorna. — Ancor di lui vedrai
che 'n gente di valor lo più si trova.
La nova — qualità move sospiri
e vol ch'om miri — 'n non formato loco,
destandos' ira la qual manda foco
(imaginar nol pote om che nol prova),
né mova — già però ch'a lui si tiri,
e non si giri — per trovarvi gioco,
né certamente gran saver né poco![160]

> ([Love's] essence/being [*essere*] is when the will [*lo voler*] is such [i.e., extends to such a degree: *è tanto*] that it turns beyond nature's limit/measure [*oltra misura di natura*]. Then it is never joined with rest; it moves [*move*], making the color change, turning laughter into tears, and distorting the face with fear: little does it remain in place. Moreover, you will see that it is found mostly [or, most intensely] in people of worth. The unique/extraordinary quality causes [*move*] sighs, and it obliges one to gaze/aim at [*vol ch'om miri*] an unformed place, arousing irascible desire [*ira*] that transmits fire. One who does not experience [that fire (internally)] cannot imagine it. [And it obliges that one] not move [*né mova*] even though he be attracted/drawn to it [i.e., to the unformed place] and not turn back around to find play/amusement [*gioco*] there, nor certainly great or lesser wisdom.)

Stanza 4 responds to the questions outlined in Stanza 1 (line 12) concerning love's essence (*essenza*) and movements (*ciascun suo movimento* ["each of its movements"]).

Since Cavalcanti tells us at the outset that the canzone will treat an accident (*accidente*) that is called love (line 2), one might challenge the

notion that love has an essence—since is it not the case that only substances have essences and that accident and essence are mutually exclusive? Does this give us reason to question Cavalcanti's credibility as an Aristotelian?[161] This challenge, however, is easily dismissed: accidents do, in a certain way, have essences. In *Epitome on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Averroes states that although, strictly speaking, only substances have definitions (i.e., essences), nonetheless "we admit that there are certain definitions of accidents."[162]

Now, there is something apparently unusual about the phrase "the essence is when" (*l'essere è quando*; line 43): essences or quiddities define the "what" of a substance and are not normally thought of as indicating the "when" (*quando*), since temporality is a category of accident. We could say that *essere* here means "being" in the sense of existence (as *esse* normally does for Aquinas)—in which case we would translate the phrase as "[Love] comes to be when . . . ". But to rule out essence would mean that Cavalcanti deviates from the task that he had set for himself, namely to treat love's *essenza* (line 12). In fact, regarding *essere* as coming into being brings us back to essence—since the essence of certain accidents involves precisely the temporal event of that (potential) accident's coming to be as actuality.

"[Love's] essence is [or: love comes to exist] when the will [*voler*] is so much [i.e., extends to such a degree] that it turns beyond nature's limit/measure [*misura di natura*]" (lines 43–44). These verses provide yet more evidence (to go with line 20's *volontate* and Stanza 3's treatment of loving as the *voluntaria investigatio intentionis*) that the accident called loving is desiring as will (*voler*) not as appetite; it is human and rational, not animal. Love is a deliberate choice.

The phrase *oltra misura di natura* ("beyond nature's limit/measure"; line 44)—often reduced to a banality[163]—calls to mind a key phrase from Cavalcanti's first poem, *Fresca rosa novella* (treated in Part 4 above): *chi poria pensare oltra natura?* ("who could think beyond nature?" (I.31). This echo is by design, since here in Stanza 4 Cavalcanti begins to sketch a portrait of a particular mode of loving and to indicate that mode's object of desire—a portrait of loving that very much resembles that drawn in Guido's love lyric corpus. Up to this point, the canzone has treated the operation of practical reason in general without disclosing the content of the *intentio* most worthy of one's choice; from here through the first half of the next stanza, Cavalcanti works to specify the noblest ethical aim. Not surprisingly, this turns out to be that ethical aim celebrated as noblest by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*: striving for a life that would be "the activity of intellect"—even though such activity is "too high for man":

> But a life of this sort would exceed what is human. For it is not insofar as he is human that a person will live this way, but insofar as

> there is something divine present in him. . . . So if intellect is something divine in comparison to the human being, the life in accord with this intellect would also be divine in comparison to the human life. But one ought not—as some recommend—to think only about human things because one is a human being, nor only about mortal things because one is mortal, but rather to make oneself immortal, insofar as that is possible, and to strain every nerve to live in accord with what is the most excellent of the things in oneself.[164]

The essence of love as Cavalcanti conceives it is the voluntary willing (*voler*) to pass *oltra natura humana* ("beyond human nature"; I.32) even while knowing that such transcendence is impossible, *oltra misura di natura* ("beyond nature's limit").[165] It is a mortal animal's desire for immortality. It is the striving for an unattainable self-divinization—one that would be achieved through thinking (*pensare*; I.31) a supranatural object.

The topics of this stanza, essence and movement, go hand-in-hand (this is why we have not divided our commentary on Stanza 4 into two parts), since in the Aristotelian worldview things are essentially defined by their motions, whether as mover or moved. (God, for example, is the Unmoved Mover.) Love's essence is the desire for a certain kind of movement—a movement beyond the measure of nature. Although physics (natural science) treats motion and change in nature, this does not mean that motion is confined to the sublunary world—obviously, since we can plainly see superlunary celestial bodies in motion. But those bodies are in infinite (eternal) circular motion. A circular motion is "beyond nature's measure": it cannot be measured because there is neither starting point nor end point by which to measure. Metaphysical motion is "beyond nature's limit" (*oltra misura di natura*; line 44) precisely because—unlike all natural movements, which are rectilinear and finite—it cannot be measured. Love for Cavalcanti (as for Dante) is the willful striving for metaphysical permanence.

Line 12 tells us that Stanza 4 will treat "each of [Love's] movements" (*ciascun suo movimento*). We should take this to mean each of two types of movement: passive (being moved) and active (moving). These two types of movement are treated in two separate parts of the stanza—each part commencing with the same word (*move*; lines 46 and 50). Passive movements happen to the lover (who in this case is an object) without having been, per se, willfully desired; active movements originate with the lover, with the moving subject's desire. The first set of movements treated (lines 46–47) are the usual bodily/passive movements mentioned in the medical treatises on lovesickness, the physiological consequences of loving. When the will (*lo voler*; line 43) turns to desiring *oltra misura di natura*, it consequently moves (*move*, line 46) parts of the lover's body in certain ways: it changes his coloring, turns his laughter to tears,

distorts his face with expressions of fear (lines 46–47), and causes sighs (line 50). In enumerating these bodily movements first in discussing love's essence, Cavalcanti is following the procedure outlined in the first chapter of Aristotle's *De anima*. There Aristotle says that to define the essence of a substance or subject—in this case, soul—one needs first to give an account of all or most of its "properties" or "affections." The affections of the soul necessarily involve the body: "It seems that all the affections of soul are in the body, such as anger, gentleness, fear, pity, courage, joy, loving, and hating; in all these there is a concurrent affection of the body."[166]

Lines 48–49, an interval between the sections on the two types of movements, tell us that "for the most part" (*lo più*) [or: "most intensely"] the willing that is loving "is found in people of worth" (*'n gente di valor si trova*).[167] This assertation that loving is a badge of honor allows us to dismiss the common view that a *voler* that is *oltra misura di natura* means, for Cavalcanti, immoderate sexual desire beyond the proportion of natural needs. The accident that is called love, says Cavalcanti, pertains especially to a certain noble elite. It strains credulity to think that Guido would assert that people of worth moderate their sexual appetites less successfully than do (and are thus less rational than) the vulgar. Instead these lines indicate that Cavalcanti is talking about something akin to so-called courtly love, the *fin amor* of the troubadours. The whole tradition of *fin amor* is grounded in a distinction between love and lust: people of worth love but they do not lust.

As the troubadour tradition developed, *fin amor* became more and more marked as unattainable desire—unattainable just insofar as it is a desire for desire itself, a desire to be perpetually fixed in a state of desire. Such desire is unnatural, beyond nature's limit or measure. In the Aristotelian view, nature does not endow creatures with desire that cannot be attained (this was summed up with the motto: "Nature does nothing in vain"). Every natural desire attains a natural end. But the courtly lover's desire never attains an end. An unattainable desire cannot be measured by the usual standards of nature: the end of such a desire, as an end that cannot be reached, is an end beyond nature, *oltra natura*. Cavalcanti's "people of worth," insofar as they love, are moved by a desire that has no end or resting place: such desire "is never crowned/joined with rest" (*non s'adorna di riposo mai* (line 45). After sex, there is rest. But people of worth desire something unattainable through sex and indeed unattainable through any natural means or in any natural situation. Like *fin amor*, Guido's love comes into its being or essence (*essere*) not as lust but precisely as the rejection of lust—the rejection of a physical end to desire. Love is a violation of the laws of physics: a desire for an infinite, circular movement (a movement beyond measure) in a sublunary world in which movements are rectilinear and finite. Sex is a matter of physics, and the rational moderation of sexual appetite is a

matter of ethics. But love is a desire for metaphysics—for a metaphysical (i.e., infinite) movement. The lover attempts to find in nature something *oltra natura*. Lovers are an elite class among humans: love is both a sign of their worth (they aim to strain themselves beyond their limits as natural creatures) and, since there are no infinite movements for humans, also the cause of their melancholic despair.

Love's active (and thus essential) movement is analyzed in lines 50–56:

50 La nova — qualità move sospiri
e vol ch'om miri 'n non formato loco
destandos'ira la qual manda foco
53 (imaginar nol pote om che nol prova),
né mova — già però ch'a lui si tiri,
e non si giri — per trovarvi gioco,
56 né certamente gran saver né poco!

The *nova* here does not especially mean "new" but rather carries the meaning (as it does throughout Cavalcanti's love lyric corpus) of "novel," "extraordinary," "unique," "unusual," "unprecedented." As we will see, this movement turns out to be quite strange: movement as an incapacity to move, as a kind of stasis, and movement as aiming for an unreachable end.

Lines 50–56 are considered notoriously opaque. Understanding this analysis of love's essential movement is not an easy task, if only because the literal meaning of this section is very much in dispute. The problem begins with line 51. Does the text read *vol ch'om miri 'n non formato loco* ("obliges one to gaze/aim at an unformed place") or *vol ch'om miri in un formato loco* ("obliges one to gaze/aim at a formed place")? The six most important recent editions are evenly split: three say that the place is "unformed" and three that it is "formed."[168]

Although *formato* is perhaps not out of the question, *non formato* makes perfect sense in the context of this stanza's formulation of love's essence as the will to turn beyond nature's limit. The key is to recognize that the place to which the loving will obliges the lover to gaze or to aim at (*vol ch'om miri*), the place *oltra misura di natura*, is the supranatural world of metaphysical entities. In what sense is that place *non formato*—not formed, unformed?

The chief aim of Averroes's *De substantia orbis*[169] is to determine whether the celestial spheres are composed of matter and form, as are all substances in the natural (i.e., sublunary) world. After first proving that a celestial sphere, since it both moves itself and is moved, has two natures, he asks whether it is proper to regard these two as matter and form. As the treatise unfolds, he shows that we can use these terms, but only if we acknowledge that we are speaking loosely, equivocally. In the metaphysical (here, meaning "eternal") realm, the celestial "form" and celestial "body" are not combined to form a compound; they are

eternal actualities separated from each other: "Since it has previously been explained concerning this body that it is not generated nor corruptible [i.e., not mortal], it seems that it must necessarily be a simple body, not one composed of matter and form"; "These forms do not subsist in the subject, but they are separated from the subject in respect to existence. . . . They do not settle upon the subject"; "The forms of the celestial bodies do not subsist in the subjects, for if they did, their motions would be finite";

> And we assert that the proposition 'the celestial body is not composed of matter and form in the manner of the transient [i.e., natural] ones' is true beyond the shadow of a doubt. . . . For it has been shown concerning the matter of the celestial body that it possesses no potentiality at all.[170]

With forms that do not inform bodies and bodies that are not informed, the celestial spheres (one must—as does Cavalcanti—say) are "not formed" (*non formato*; line 51). Moreover, they have no potentiality and no alteration except that involving *place* (*locus*)—i.e., locomotion: "The reasons are that the celestial body is not subject to any of the laws of potentiality except that of potentiality in respect to *place*, and that it has the most noble kind of locomotion, namely, circular."[171] With line 51's "unformed place" (*non formato loco*), Cavalcanti provides a perfect designation for the metaphysical realm.

We find additional (if not even more significant) support for reading *non formato loco* as the higher-than-human metaphysical realm in *LC*, where Averroes characterizes the Possible Intellect precisely as an unformed place:

> This substance which is called the Possible Intellect has none of those material forms in its nature . . . because it is a substance, and what is a recipient of material things or material forms does not have a material form in itself, namely, it is not a substance composed of matter and form. . . . [The] nature [of the Possible Intellect] is other than the nature of matter, other than the nature of form, and other than the nature of the composite.[172]

Loving, as the urge for Intellection in the proper sense, is the urge to know what the Possible Intellect knows: hence the lover is obliged to look toward and aim at (*mirare*) the unformed place that is the Possible Intellect. Obliged by will/love (*lo voler*, line 43; *vol*, line 51), the lover gazes at/aims for (*miri*: *mirare*; line 51) the metaphysical realm. The new and extraordinary quality (*la nova qualità*; line 50), acquired when the lover accidentally (quality being a category of accident) changes from potentially to actually loving, arouses ire and fire: "The new/extraordinary

quality causes [*move*] sighs and demands that one aim for an unformed place [i.e., for the metaphysical realm], arousing ire [*ira*] that transmits fire [*foco*]" (lines 51–52). This ire is not anger, and the fire is not literally fire, since it is perceptible only to the internal not the external senses ("one who does not experience it [internally] cannot imagine it" [*imaginar nol pote om che nol prova*]; line 53).[173] The will/love that aims for the metaphysical realm is irascible desire: willfully deferring immediately present pleasure to undertake an endeavor that, although difficult, arduous, and currently painful, will be most pleasant in the long run. Indeed, loving in the mode portrayed here by Cavalcanti (a natural and thus mortal creature's striving for metaphysical permanence beyond nature and measure) is quintessentially irascible—for what could be more arduous than the impossible? What could be less immediate than the attainment of a hopeless hope? Concomitant with this willing, the body's spirits in this case fuel an internal fire, the vital heat—a stimulation to ardor (cf. Latin *ardor*: "burning," "heat"): one must be especially fired up to dare to embrace an impossible project.

Despite this burning ardor to pursue the ultra-arduous, the lover does not move: loving (the lover's new quality [*nova qualità*; line 50] as an actual not potential lover) necessitates (*vol*; line 50) that the lover aim for an unformed place; in addition, loving necessitates that the lover "not move even though he be attracted/drawn to it [i.e., to the unformed place]" (*né mova già però ch'a lui si tiri*; line 54).[174] Why does loving mandate that the lover not move to the place of the desired object? Recall Aristotle's assertion that a rational being, when it desires decisively, must and will act according to its desire:

> Whatever alternative a rational being desires decisively, that he will do whenever he is capable of acting and when he is brought into connection with the chosen object to be acted upon. Consequently, every being which has a rational power must, when it has the desire, do what it has power to do and in the way in which it has it.[175]

If love's law dictates that the lover not move to the unformed place, this can only be because he is *not* "capable of acting" thus, is *not* "brought into connection with the chosen object," and does *not* have "the power to do" such a thing. In this, the most ethically noble mode of loving, the lover *does not* move because he *cannot* move. Translocating to the unformed place is *oltra misura di natura*, beyond the limitations of a human as a natural being.

But if the lover cannot make that move, neither does he turn back to the *intentio* that he has decisively discarded: loving mandates that the lover "not turn back around to find play/amusement [*gioco*] there [i.e., not turn back to the place that he has rejected]" (*non si giri per trovarvi gioco*; line 55). Loving in its most ethically noble mode is the

decision to pursue lofty not childish pleasure. The lover *turns* (*torna*; line 44) to the unformed place but, although he cannot get there, he does not *return* (*si giri*: *girarsi*, "to turn around, "to come back," "to return"; line 55) to there where he was prior to desiring decisively. The impossibility of achieving the pursuit of lofty pleasure does not entail settling for lesser pleasure: to do so would not be the act of irascible desire and hence would not be loving. The lover (by definition) having desired decisively, it is simply no longer possible that his desire might now turn concupiscible.

There are two kinds of wisdom: the human (*ratio*) and the divine (*intellectus*). The lover of wisdom (*saver*; line 56) would not turn back to the place of *gioco*, for he would certainly find neither type of wisdom there: *né certamente gran saver né poco!* ("nor certainly great or lesser wisdom"; line 56). The lesser wisdom is *praxis*, the domain of *ratio*. The great wisdom is *theoria*, the domain of *intellectus*. Aristotle's sketch of three prominent types of human life is strikingly pertinent here: "For there are, we may say, three prominent types of life—the life of enjoyment; the political [i.e., *praxis*]; and the contemplative life [*bios theoretikos*]."[176] The life of enjoyment, which Aristotle deems "a life suitable for beasts,"[177] is the *gioco* (line 55) toward which the lover refuses to move; the political/ethical life is the *poco saver* (line 56); the contemplative life is the *gran saver* (line 56).

By the end of *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle has formulated an ethical imperative that puts us in a difficult position requiring arduous commitment. The highest ethical aim that can be chosen by humans is to live the *bios theoretikos*, the life of contemplation (*theoria*, *speculatio*)—the *gran saver* of line 56. Devoting oneself to attaining this aim is the very pinnacle of practical reasoning, which involves answering the question, "What should I do"? The life of intellect is complete happiness, the highest and most noble human activity:

> The activity of intellect, because it is contemplative, seems to be superior [to political action—i.e., to the *poco saver* of line 56] in seriousness, to aim at no end apart from itself, and to have pleasure proper to it. . . . And all else that falls to the lot of the blessed person manifestly accords with this contemplative activity. If this is all so, then this activity would constitute the complete happiness of a human being. . . . But a life of this sort would exceed what is human. For it is not insofar as he is human that a person will live this way, but insofar as there is something divine present in him. . . . But one ought not—as some recommend—to think only about human things because one is a human being, nor only about mortal things because one is mortal, but rather to make oneself immortal, insofar as that is possible, and to strain every nerve to live in accord with what is the most excellent of the things in oneself.[178]

Aristotle seems ambivalent here, suggesting that we cannot properly perform the activity of intellect but rather only imperfectly—that we cannot in truth make ourselves immortal. At least this is how Averroes interprets Aristotle's intention. Aristotle thus establishes as the highest object of love an end that is impossible to attain. Since all natural ends are attainable, the highest ethical desire is unnatural, *oltra misura di natura*.

Metaphysics is a subject matter of ethics, since ethics teaches that the highest happiness, the worthiest object of our desire, is metaphysical intellection. But that superior happiness is not the *buon perfetto* (line 39), the perfect good. A good that is perfect is completely actual: it is the undividedness of potency and act. But loving as formulated in Stanza 4 is aiming for an act that is beyond the limits of potency. The *buon perfetto* can be translated as the "completed good," since perfection and completion for Aristotle are in effect synonyms. There is the good that we can complete: the *buon perfetto*, the good of *praxis*, which is the actuality of our potential to desire rationally, to choose freely through the operation of cogitation/love. Stanza 3 treats loving in this general ethical sense. Paradoxically, we complete our rational desiring in the highest manner when we strive for a good that we cannot complete, that will never be *perfetto*. Stanza 4 singles out, from among various practices in accord with the general ethical operation of loving, pursuit of the *bios theoretikos* as the most noble human practice. But although we strive for the life of *intellectus*, we remain in the place of *ratio*, having surpassed the life of enjoyment/*gioco*; this is precisely the status of the lover described by Cavalcanti in lines 54–56.

Stanza 5

De simil tragge — complessione sguardo
che fa parere — lo piacere — certo.
Non pò coverto — star, quand'è sì giunto.
Non già selvagge, — le bieltà son dardo,
che tal volere — per temere — è sperto.
Consiegue merto — spirito ch'è punto!
E' non si pò conoscer per lo viso
compriso: — bianco in tale obietto cade;
e, chi ben aude, — forma non si vede:
dunqu'elli meno, che da lei procede.
For di colore, d'essere diviso,
assiso — in mezzo scuro, luce rade.
For d'ogne fraude, — dico, degno in fede,
che solo di costui nasce mercede!

(From a like constitution [love] draws a glance that makes pleasure seem certain: it cannot remain hidden once it has reached such a

> point. Beauties—but not, of course, those that are rustic—are an arrow: because such desire [*volere*] is put to the test [*esperto*] by fear. A person [*spirito*] who is [thus] pierced [*punto*] obtains merit. It [i.e., love] cannot be known through comprehended vision [*viso compriso*]: white founders in such an object; and he who listens well [knows that] form is not seen, and thus [love] even less so, since it proceeds from form. Lacking color, divided from being, situated in a dark medium, [love] shines rarely. Without any deceit [and] worthy of trust, I say that [the] reward comes only/simply from this [i.e., from loving itself]!)

Stanza 5 (a) 'l piacimento che 'l fa dire "amare" (lines 57–62)

The first part of Stanza 5, treating "the pleasure that makes [the accident in question] called 'loving'" (*'l piacimento che 'l fa dire "amare"*; line 13), is a particularly remarkable achievement. With these two tercets Cavalcanti comes closest to writing love lyric while remaining more than ever thoroughly guided by Aristotelian philosophy. The focus on pleasure is integral to the canzone's primarily ethical perspective: ethics is a matter of voluntary movements (pursuit and flight), and the fundamental principles of animal (i.e., imaginative/non-ethical) and human (i.e., cogitative/ethical) movements are pleasure and pain.[179] Pleasure appears in the first of these tercets (line 58: loving "makes pleasure seem certain" [*fa parere lo piacere certo*]) and pain in the second (the painful arrow [*dardo*; line 60] that, having pierced and wounded [*punto*; line 62] the lover, allows him to prove his mettle). These verses naturally involve two cornerstone rational emotions, hope and fear: hope for pleasure in the first tercet and fear (*temere*; line 61) of pain in the second. As we will see, Cavalcanti links pleasure with the name for loving—*amare*—in a twofold manner: the first involving (but far surpassing) a commonplace play on *amaro* ("bitter"),[180] the second insisting on *amare*'s status as a verb of action (i.e., actual operation). Remarkably, both motivations for the accident's name are grounded in Aristotle's accounts of pleasure: it is truly pleasure that makes loving called "*amare*" (*piacimento che 'l fa dire "amare"*; line 13).

> De simil tragge — complessione sguardo
> che fa parere — lo piacere — certo.
> 59 Non pò coverto — star, quand'è sì giunto.

Love draws or elicits (*tragge*) a glance (*sguardo*) from a similar complexion—that is, from a person of like constitution (line 57); this promising glance makes pleasure (*lo piacere*) seem certain (line 58): there is at least the appearance of a successful outcome, without which

there would not be hope but despair. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle emphasizes similarity as a chief cause of pleasure:

> All kindred and similar things are for the most part pleasant to each other; for instance, one man, horse, or young person is pleasant to another man, horse, or young person. Hence the proverbs "mate delights mate," "like to like," "beast knows beast," "jackdaw to jackdaw," and the rest of them. . . . Everything like and akin to oneself is pleasant.[181]

Similarly, in Book 8 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, which treats love and especially friendship (the latter as so closely analogous to the former that it is in effect a mode of love), Aristotle locates pleasure in similarity—in this case the similarity between those who are both good:

> But complete friendship is the friendship of those who are good and alike in point of virtue. For such people wish in similar fashion for the good things for each other insofar as they are good, and they are good in themselves. . . . So too are they pleasant, for the good are both pleasant simply and pleasant to one another. To each person, his own actions and those like them accord with his pleasure, and the actions of those who are good are the same or similar. . . . For every friendship exists on account of a good or pleasure, and the actions of those who are good are the same or similar.[182]

Similarity as love's cause is also a commonplace of the medical treatises on love; Constantine the African, for example, says that the love that is called "eros" sometimes stems from the soul's observing "a form similar to itself."[183] But the differences between *Donna me prega* and the medical discussions (in which love is a disease of the brain that can often lead to physical death [not, as Guido says, a "volition of the heart" (line 20) that prevents one from suffering ethical death] and "a great longing with intense sexual desire and affliction of the thoughts [*cogitationum*]"[184]) are too great—and Aristotle's association between pleasure and similarity is too strong—to consider them especially relevant texts for Cavalcanti's formulation of "the pleasure that makes [the accident] called loving" (line 13).

If we can generally agree on the meaning of lines 57–59, there is a considerable lack of consensus on both the specific details and the general sense of lines 60–62. We should bear in mind as a guiding principle that the question addressed in this half-stanza is not just love's "pleasure" but, more specifically, "the pleasure that makes it called 'loving' ['*amare*']"). What sort of pleasure would lead to this sort of accident being called a*mare*?

The second tercet (lines 60–62) is the only place in the canzone (besides the opening word, *Donna*, and perhaps the reference to Mars in Stanza 2) where Cavalcanti employs a poetic image, a figural device that means other than what it says: the arrow (*dardo*; line 60) that strikes/wounds (*punto*; line 62) the lover. In this tercet, Cavalcanti vaguely sketches a miniature scene out of the repertoire of courtly love lyric. But before we can move from that depiction to its intended significance, we need to establish what these verses say literally. This is problematic, since there is wide disagreement over the sense of two key words: *selvagge* (line 60) and *esperto* (or, *sperto*; line 61). Leaving those words alone for the moment, we have this: "Beauties—but surely not those that are *selvagge*—are arrows/because such desire [*volere*] is *esperto* [or, *sperto*] by fear."

Let us first consider *selvagge*. Possible pertinent senses include those signified by the Modern Italian *selvaggio* (as an adjective: "wild," "savage," "primitive," "ferocious," "brutal," "cruel"; as a noun: "a savage [person]") and the Modern Italian *selvatico* (an adjective meaning "wild" [referring to animals or plants] or "unsociable," in the sense of "timid" or "fearful" [referring to persons]). Commentators have proposed two primary alternatives (each with several subvariants) for glossing *selvagge*. First (and most commonly proposed), this may be the equivalent of *rustiche*: women who are rustic, rural, or from the country, peasant girls (e.g., a shepherdess)—those who dwell outside the city, perhaps bordering on the woods or the wilds.[185] Second, *selvagge* may indicate not social class or provenance but rather the attitude displayed by women who are "savage" in the sense of "brutal," "fierce," "cruel," "resistant"—i.e., hostile to the lover's amorous advances.[186]

As for *esperto/sperto*, commentators are, again, divided into two camps: first, those who think that Cavalcanti regards fear (*temere*; line 61) as a *negative*, something that is non-conducive to, inhibits, hinders, and dissolves the accident that is called love; second, those who think that he regards fear as a *positive*, a necessary component by which the nobility of one's love is measured. Commentators agree that *esperto/sperto* is the past participle of either *spergere* or *[e]sperire*—the former meaning "to disperse," "to destroy," "to annihilate," the latter meaning "to put to the test," "to prove," "to experience." Partisans of *spergere* read *sperto* as meaning "dispelled," "dispersed," "dissipated," "put to flight," "rendered vain."[187] Partisans of *[e]sperire* read *sperto* (or, *esperto*) as "put to the proof," "tested by," "experienced."[188] In brief, Cavalcanti is saying either that love is *destroyed by* fear or that love is *put to the test* by fear.

It is not difficult to decide. For Cavalcanti, as we have seen and will continue to see, the accident that is called love is irascible desire—hope for something difficult to attain, put to the test by fear of painful failure. Fear is love's catalyst and the measure and proof of the lover's nobility.

In this courtly love scenario, those beauties who are excluded from consideration, the *selvagge*, are peasant women: in the sociology inaugurated by the troubadours the lover must be in a position of impotence, non-power, in relation to a lady of the highest nobility. The courtly lover has no fear of a country girl: a relation with such a girl is too immediate, too easy, and thus not a means by which the noble lover can prove, put to the test, or experience his love. Peasant women do not constitute arrows or darts that aim at, strike, and wound the lover; they cannot arouse in the lover's soul the accident that is called love. This is because it is *they* who, as subordinates in a power relation, are fearful of the noble lover (the Occitan *pastorella* often represents what amounts to a sexual assault or at the least sexual harassment), whereas love demands that the noble lover be fearful of the even more noble lady. It must be the lady who holds power over, assails and frightens the lover. And so, lines 60–61 become clear: "Beautiful peasant girls, surely, are not arrows [i.e., they do not strike the lover with fear and thus with irascible desire]/for such desire is put to the test through fear."[189]

We should pause for a moment to think back on what we have read in *Donna me prega* so far. There has not been a single trace of love in the sense that usually pertains in medieval vernacular lyric, as a man's desire for a romantic or erotic relationship with a woman. Yet in the exegetical tradition there is more than abundant talk about what the canzone says concerning the lover's desire for his *donna*; this is especially prevalent in discussion of the "seen form that is intended" (line 21) that is love's provenance or proximate cause: that form is frequently assumed to be the *intentio* of the lover's lady.[190] In truth the canzone does not say a single word about the lover's lady or her form. Only here (lines 57–62) is there a fleeting glance toward love in the ordinary sense; nothing that follows in the rest of the poem can be construed as referring to a *donna*. And even in this vague gesture toward courtly love, the lover's lady is entirely missing—existing if at all only as a construction in the mind of the reader.

It is also only here that one can find a poetic image: the glance of non-rustic beauties as an arrow that wounds the lover. This momentary deployment of metaphor heightens the palpability of figural language as such: we recognize that these tercets say one thing but mean something else. We will see below a similar turn from scientific to poetic language in a passage from Aristotle that is key for understanding the pleasure that makes loving called *amare*. There, in a definitive account of pleasure, Aristotle employs beauty (*pulchritudo*[191]; see line 60: *le bieltà*, "beauties") as the vehicle of a solitary simile that stands out as an island of figural language in a sea of scientific discourse.

In these tercets, hope (lines 57–59) and fear (60–62) are represented with a poetic figure drawn from literary tradition. Invoking love's arrow, Cavalcanti aims to indicate the fearful pain that one who desires

irascibly endures in the hope of attaining something in the future that will be marked by pleasure. As Aquinas says in his *Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*: "Hope for something good and fear of something bad pertain to the irascible power."[192]

The question addressed in this part of the poem, then, is this: What constitutes the pleasure (*'l piacimento*; line 13) of irascible desire (*amare*; line 13)? Since—as we saw earlier in discussing the diagram from a sixteenth-century printed edition of Averroes's *LC*—irascible desire is in effect the equivalent of rationality (*irascitiva* is the power of soul pertaining to things *rationalium*), this amounts to the question concerning the pleasure of reasoning. Cavalcanti's formulation of an answer is shaped by Aristotle's accounts of pleasure in *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics*.

In *Rhetoric* Aristotle asserts that pleasure is "a movement by which the soul as a whole is consciously brought into its normal state of being" and that "pain is the opposite."[193] Pleasure is one's conscious awareness that one's natural state, after having been absent, has been restored: "It must be pleasant for the most part to move towards a natural state of being, particularly when a natural process has achieved the complete recovery of that natural state."[194] Aristotle adds that the movement of pleasure must be unforced, non-compulsory:

> Again, that is pleasant which is not forced on us; for force is unnatural, and that is why what is compulsory is painful, and it has been rightly said: 'All that is done on compulsion is bitterness to the soul.'[195]

Pleasure is the conscious awareness that one is returning toward one's natural state of being through unforced, non-compulsory movement. Loving as understood by Cavalcanti is certainly unforced and non-compulsory: as we have seen several times, it is a freely chosen, voluntary movement. But should it not then, following Aristotle, be described as sweet, not as bitter (see line 13; *amare*: *amaro*, "bitter")? Indeed, throughout this treatment of pleasure, Aristotle adorns his discussion with quotes, drawn from Homer, Euripides, and others, in which he takes sweetness to be a synonym for pleasure (and bitterness as a synonym for pain, as in the quote from the poet-philosopher Evenus of Paros, just mentioned earlier).[196] Yet Cavalcanti implies that the first part of Stanza 5 will explain the pleasure that makes love called bitter. Moreover, for Cavalcanti love comes into being when the lover desires to move toward a state *oltra misura di natura*, beyond nature's limit/measure. The movement that Guido calls loving, which is not toward restoration of one's natural state, ought to be called, by an Aristotelian, pain not pleasure. And pleasure ought to be called sweet not bitter. How do we account for these incongruities?

The answer appears in the continuation of Aristotle's discussion, in a passage (just following the "compulsion is bitterness unto the soul" quote) that Cavalcanti draws upon brilliantly. Force is unnatural,

compulsion is painful and bitter, *unless we are accustomed to them* (see line 20: *d'alma costume*, "custom of the soul"):

> So all acts of concentration, strong effort, and strain are necessarily painful; they all involve compulsion and force, *unless we are accustomed to them, in which case it is custom that makes them pleasant*. The opposites to these are pleasant; and hence ease, freedom from toil, relaxation, amusement, rest, and sleep belong to the class of pleasant things; for these are all free from any element of compulsion.[197]

When one's nature has been formed by the second nature that is custom (e.g., by education) to force oneself to strive for the arduous and ultra-difficult, such compulsion is pleasant and sweet, while abandoning that striving is painful and bitter. The lover of wisdom voluntarily forces himself to strive, compulsively, for a wisdom that may not be attained. The lover, desiring irascibly, finds pleasure in pursuit of the bitter—i.e., of what the general run of humans find unpleasant: effort, toil, intellectual labor. Such pleasure is *called* bitter ("the pleasure that makes [loving] called bitter"; line 13)—it is conceived as such by non-strivers—but to the lover it is sweet. Not by chance, the language of effortful straining that Aristotle uses here is the same as that which he uses in the passage—perhaps *the* key passage for the establishment of Arabic Aristotelianism's program—where he urges us to "strain every nerve" to "as far as we can, make ourselves immortal," even though "a life of this sort would exceed what is human." Such savoring the sweetness of what in an ordinary view seems bitter is precisely the status enjoyed by the persona of Cavalcanti's love lyrics—one who can say "dying to me is pleasure/play" (*'l morir m'è gioco*; XI.7). And, we realize that Aristotle does not regard the so-called pleasures mentioned here, such as amusement (see line 55: *gioco*, "play"), rest, and sleep, as being true pleasures: for Aristotle sleep (as we will see presently) is the very antithesis of pleasure, which in its authentic sense is *energeia*, enduring waking activity.

If Aristotle's discussion of common notions of pleasure in *Rhetoric* provides the basis for Cavalcanti's explaining why love is called *amare/amaro* ("bitter"), his discussion of true pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* helps us understand why love is called loving (*amare*).

For Aristotle, happiness and virtue, human excellence, the completion and attainment of the good human life, resides in *activity* (*energeia*).[198] Time and again, he emphasizes that possessing a power to do such-and-such is in effect meaningless, since what counts is that the power actually be operating:

> But it makes, perhaps, no small difference whether we place the chief good in possession or in use, in state of mind or in activity (*energeia*). For the state of mind may exist without producing any

> good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive, but the activity cannot, for the one who has the activity will of necessity be acting—and acting well. . . . So those who act rightly win the noble and good things in life. Their life is also in itself pleasant.[199]

Life, for Aristotle, *is* activity. In formulating his definition of the good human life, he stipulates that "life in the sense of activity is what we mean, for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term."[200] Concerning the gods, he says: "Everyone supposes that they *live* and therefore that they are active; we cannot suppose them to sleep like Endymion."[201] Hence Aristotle defines human happiness as "an active life of the element that has a rational principle" and the human good as "activity of soul . . . in conformity with the best and most complete [human] excellence."[202]

The sleeping mathematician is not actual *qua* mathematician; yet neither is the mathematician who, awake, is not *doing math*.[203] Humans by nature have the power to cogitate. But humans who are not exercising that power, who are not cogitating, are like the mathematician who is not doing math: they are not actual *qua* humans, not leading a human life. A rational animal who is not "thinking, loving, and hating" is not actual *qua* rational animal. All humans by nature are potential lovers, but not all humans are loving. The correlative in *Donna me prega*, the one who, not cogitating, is not alive (line 40) but is in oblivion (*s'oblia*; line 42), lost in a sleeplike state of forgetfulness, is the one who is not loving; love in the proper sense of the term is not a static possibility but an activity—and hence it is called, with the infinitive of the verb, *amare*; "to love," "loving."

It is now easy to see what constitutes "the pleasure that makes it [i.e., *amore*/love—a noun; line 3] called loving [*amare*—a verb; line 13]." That pleasure is the activity of loving itself. For in Book 10 of *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle constantly reiterates that pleasure is activity:

> Life is an activity. . . . But whether we choose life for the sake of pleasure or pleasure for the sake of life is a question we may dismiss for the present. For they seem to be bound up together and not to admit of separation, since without activity pleasure does not arise, and every activity is completed by pleasure.[204]

All sorts of activities are pleasurable. But *Nicomachean Ethics* is a treatise on happiness, stipulated as "the chief good" and as something that "we desire for its own its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this)."[205] This turns out to be, as we just saw earlier, activity of the rational principle of the soul in conformity with the most noble human excellence. The happy human will "always, or by preference to everything else, do and contemplate what is excellent."[206] The "do

and contemplate" here indicates the two kinds of authentic happiness identified by Aristotle: the ethical/political (*praxis*) and the speculative/scientific (*theoria*). These correspond, respectively, to the two elements of the rational principle of the soul: *logos* (*ratio*) and *nous* (*intellectus*). This is a graded distinction: contemplation (which, although not action, *is* an activity) is a higher happiness than doing. Contemplative activity, the *bios theoretikos* (that for which we must "strain every nerve" and so that appears bitter not sweet to most people), is the highest pleasure:

> If happiness is an activity in accord with virtue, it is reasonable that it would accord with the most excellent virtue, and this would be the virtue belonging to what is best. So whether this is the intellect or something else that seems naturally to rule, to command, and to possess intelligence concerning what is noble and divine, whether it itself is in fact divine or the most divine of the things in us—the activity of this, in accord with the virtue proper to it, would be complete happiness. And that this activity is contemplative has been said. . . . And so for a human being, this is the life that accords with the intellect, if in fact this especially *is* a human being. This life, therefore, is also the happiest.[207]

The most excellent and thus the most pleasurable human activity is the contemplation of divine entities, *theoria* of metaphysical things. Aristotle leaves open the question of whether the element of our rational soul (the soul's highest element) that might apprehend divine things is itself divine—that is, whether it is intellect (*nous*). Averroes, as we have seen, denies that it is, for he denies that the intellect is a "thing in us." In Cavalcanti's Averroist view, carrying out the highest and most pleasant human activity—contemplating divine things—is problematic, since only a metaphysical entity (such as *nous/intellectus*) can apprehend a metaphysical entity. Hence the activity of the *bios theoretikos*—an activity *oltra misura di natura*—is the extremity of the arduous; and loving as conceived by the lover of wisdom is the limit-case of irascible desire. Yet in a sense this makes doing metaphysics the epitome of happiness, since metaphysics thus becomes something that we "desire for its own sake" rather than for some end. More precisely, in doing metaphysics without completion, without attaining *theoria* of divine things, the "activity itself is the end of the action," as Aristotle says regarding the chief good[208]; even though such activity is not "something complete," it *is* "self-sufficient and . . . and the aim of action."[209]

We are now in position to pick up the verse that we left dangling, the closing verse of the first part of Stanza 5: *consiegue merto spirito ch'è punto* ("a person who is pierced obtains merit"; line 62). A person who is wounded by the arrow that is non-rustic beauties (line 60) receives "merit," which should be understood in the sense of an indicator,

a sign: the visible wound or scar left behind by the arrow. This *merto* is akin to a merit badge, a certificate (we might even call it a tattoo) that verifies a certain status or state of affairs. This is precisely how Aristotle conceives pleasure in a key passage from Book 10 of *Nicomachean Ethics*: "Pleasure completes the activity not as the inherent state does, but as an end which supervenes as the bloom of youth does on those in the flower of their age."[210] (For the latter part of the last clause here, the Latin of Averroes's Middle Commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* reads *ut pulchritudo que inuenitur in iuuentute* ["as the beauty that is found in youth"].)[211] Here Aristotle employs a simile involving beauty (as does Cavalcanti in lines 60–62) to clarify his conception of pleasure. The activity of youth, the "inherent state," is being youthful. This activity is completed with no reference to beauty; that is, one can be youthful yet not beautiful. Beauty is a sign or indicator, but not an essential condition, of youth. Similarly, pleasure is a sign of an inherent or underlying state of good activity but is neither essential to that activity nor the desired goal (just as a tattoo may be a mark of a social identity but is not the essence of that identity). Pleasure is only an end in a weak sense, as "an end which supervenes," not in the sense of the *telos* or end desired for its own sake. In doing the activity one was not aiming for pleasure, but pleasure follows or accompanies the completion (i.e., the actuality) of the activity. Averroes's Middle Commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* spells this out: "I mean that beauty is the disposition which follows [*sequens*] youth, not a disposition which completes/actualizes it."[212] We recognize in *sequens* Cavalcanti's *consiegue* (line 62): pleasure is a sign, like a badge of *merto*, that supervenes on but is not itself essential to the activity—in this case, the activity of loving.

The usual interpretation of *Donna me prega*, maintaining that Cavalcanti views love as inescapable passion, an excessive erotic impulse that debilitates reason and precludes intellection, can scarcely avoid characterizing love as an unchecked desire for pleasure. But in truth for Cavalcanti love has little or nothing to do with pleasure per se. One does not love for the sake of pleasure (for in that case loving would not be its own end), nor is pleasure the content or object of loving. Pleasure is not some determinate sphere of activity that the rational human ought to avoid or to approach with moderation and caution. Rather, pleasure is consequent upon the rational activity of loving itself. This helps explain why the *Io* of Cavalcanti's love lyrics often seems indifferent to pleasure and pain: these are not objects pursued or fled for their own sake but rather are consequences of the striving to live the *bios theoretikos*.

Stanza 5 (b) s'omo per veder lo pò mostrare (lines 63–70)

The question that anchors lines 63–70 is "whether one can display [love] visually" (*s'omo per veder lo pò mostrare*; line 14). In this, the canzone's

final section (not counting the *congedo*, which is not strictly speaking part of the treatise), Cavalcanti fittingly focuses his energy on performing the activity that gives the highest pleasure: he engages in loving by doing metaphysics.

This engagement with metaphysics (lines 63–68) is perhaps "the most tortuous [i.e. difficult] . . . and thus also the most tortured [i.e., abused by interpreters] part of the entire canzone."[213] The only thing that is clear from the commentary tradition is that this passage is regarded as exceedingly difficult to understand. The difficulty begins with a question concerning the punctuation (or lack thereof) at the end of line 63:

63 E' non si pò conoscer per lo viso
compriso: — bianco in tale obietto cade;
e, chi ben aude, — forma non si vede:
66 dunqu'elli meno, che da lei procede.

Should one place a stop after *viso* or rather, recognizing an instance of enjambment, after *compriso*? In numerous editions and commentaries, the text reads: *E non si pò conoscer per lo viso:/compriso, bianco in tale obietto cade*.[214] In this rendering, *compriso* is linked with *bianco* and is part of the thought expressed in line 64. But others, including the poem's most philosophically informed recent editors, present the following: *E' non si pò conoscer per lo viso/compriso: bianco in tale obietto cade*.[215] This links *compriso* with *viso* and treats it as part of the thought expressed in line 63. Does the poem speak of *bianco* being *compriso*, or rather of *viso compriso*?

There are several reasons—too complex to treat in detail here—that demand our rejecting punctuation immediately after *viso*; and, this rejection is of considerable importance, since it involves refuting one of the most influential modern readings of the canzone.[216] Let us simply say that the reading that imposes itself is this: "[Love] cannot be known through *viso compriso*." This *compris*o is the Latin *comprehensus*: "apprehended," "understood." *Viso compriso* is visual sense-perception *along with* the further apprehension (according to various degrees of understanding) of that sense-perception performed by the various internal senses or faculties of the soul; in short, it is *intentio*, spiritual form. Line 63 (with the *compriso* of line 64) says the following: "Love cannot be known through an i*ntentio* of something seen." That is, love, not being a substance, does not have a form, and so there is no itinerary leading from perception of that thing to, ultimately, its intellection in the Possible Intellect: there is no intelligible form of love. "Knowing" love, then, would not be intellecting an intelligible form but rather some other kind of knowing (more akin, as we will see, to recognizing).[217]

The question concerning love's visibility is a question in metaphysics. Note that in lines 63–66, the question of visibility is bound up with the

notion of form. The key to comprehending these verses is a passage on visibility and form in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and, especially, Averroes's discussion of that passage in *LC*:

> There are three kinds of substances: one is matter, which is "this thing" insofar as it is seen; for all things that are characterized by contact and not by organic unity are matter and substratum. The second is nature [i.e., form], a "this" and a state that it moves towards. There is a third substance, composed of these two, belonging to every individual thing like Socrates and Callias. In every individual thing, the meaning of "this thing" is nothing but the compound substance itself.[218]

Despite the first phrase here ("there are three kinds of substances"), this is not an enumeration of every kind of substance. For instance, the consideration of separate substances—whether they exist and what they are—follows later, as one of Book Lambda's chief concerns. This passage deals with determinate particulars: individual things, of which one can say "this thing"—this man, this house, this horse. Averroes interprets a thing "characterized by contact and not by organic unity" to mean the matter of a thing minus or separated out from its intelligible form (if such were possible). Such matter's "being depends on the thing through which it is perceived . . . that is to say [on] its intelligible form."[219] Divided from form, this matter and substrate is in a relation of "contact and contiguity" with that form; in such a state, it is only visible as "this thing" through reference to something external, namely, that form. It has no being of its own but only exists as "this thing" due to its relation to something else—an intelligible form: "It is as if [Aristotle] had said that it is known that its nature consists in its relation and that it has no nature of its own."[220] It is form that allows us to see something as an individual thing, a "this thing":

> Accordingly, the meaning of "it is 'this thing' insofar as it is seen" is: it is that whose being or individual existence is considered from the point of view of the thing by which it becomes perceptible, namely the form, because matter is not perceptible by itself but only through something else, i.e., through the form. It has no existence save insofar as it is perceptible through something else, not perceptible by itself. It exists only from the point of view of the thing through which it is seen and perceived [i.e., through form].[221]

When we see "this thing," we don't so much see its physical stuff as we see its form; nor do we ever see (in the physical/optical sense of "to see") its form (*forma non si vede*; "form is not seen," line 65). Rather, we see a "this thing" *qua* "this thing" *through* (i.e., by means of, on account of)

the form (*per lo viso compriso*; "*through* intended vision," lines 63–64). The form is not seen (i.e., not perceived by the external sense of vision), but it is "seen"—i.e., apprehended mentally—whenever we recognize contiguous matter as "this thing." As Averroes says: "Form is not apprehended through sense-perception [line 65: *forma non si vede*], but through its effect. Therefore, it is only apprehended [i.e., 'seen'] by the intellect."[222]

E' non si pò conoscer per lo viso compriso (lines 63–64) means this: "[Love] cannot be recognized/apprehended [*conoscere*: 'to recognize,' 'to apprehend'] through form abstracted from a visual sense-perception [*viso compriso*]." For that reason, the accident that is called loving *cannot* be a "this thing," an individual substance, a determinate particular—since such things *are* apprehended through form. In the case of something such as this (*in tale obietto*, "in such an object"; line 64) there is no whiteness (*bianco . . . cade*; "white fails/founders/is nullified"). Whiteness is an accident—in fact, for Aristotle it is the exemplary accident[223]; and, not being a substance, whiteness can only inhere in a substance, in a "this thing"—e.g., in this horse. Cavalcanti's point is not just that loving is an accident not a substance (we have known that since line 2). What is new here is the assertion that the accident called loving is not a *visible* accident; it cannot be seen in the manner of, for instance, the color of a substance (e.g., the whiteness of a horse): love is, says Cavalcanti, "without [i.e., lacking] color" (*for di colore*; line 67).

Love is not a substance. Love is not a form. (Should we need a proof that love is not a form, Cavalcanti provides us one: *forma non si vede:/ dunqu'elli meno, che da lei procede* ["form is not seen; thus, love (is) even less so, since it (i.e., love) proceeds from it (i.e., form)"; lines 65–66]. Whatever else this might mean, it necessarily means that love is not form, since it is something that *proceeds from* form: "it" [love] is not "it" [form].) Love is not a visible accident. Love is, then, a nonvisible accident.

Still, love *is* shown or displayed (*mostrare*; line 14); it *is* recognized or apprehended (*conoscer*; line 63). That love may be known or detected in at least some manner and to some degree is a premise of lines 63–64: "It cannot be recognized/apprehended through *viso compriso*" signifies that there *is* some way in which it *can* be recognized/apprehended, perceived.

So, how is a nonvisible accident such as loving shown, displayed, apprehended, perceived? A visible accident is apprehended through visual sense-perception (*per veder*; line 14). The matter of a "this thing" is apprehended *qua* "this thing" through that thing's form (as we learned from Averroes), even though form itself cannot be seen (*forma non si vede*; line 65). A nonvisible accident is displayed and apprehended not through form but through the *effects* of form, since form itself can only be apprehended through its effects (Averroes: "Form is not apprehended

through sense-perception, but through its effect"). Such an accident can only be perceived through the effects of something only perceptible through its effects. The answer to the question posed by line 14 is a much qualified "no": no, one cannot display love visually, but nonetheless it can be perceived through the effects of form. The form of a substance is seen (mentally) through its effects—namely, through what that substance causes, develops into, tends toward: through its movements, operations, and procedures (*da lei procede*; line 66). The form of a substance is seen not as what it is but through what it does. Love is seen through the doings of the form "rational animal." Love is displayed through someone's loving and recognized through our seeing someone loving. It goes without saying that, as an effect of the form "rational animal," love is an operation of rationality. When we see rationality in action, we see love.[224] Loving is rationality in act.

The treatise closes with an assertion that loving is a self-generated internal illumination of the enmattered soul and an attestation that loving has no aim other than loving itself:

> For di colore, d'essere diviso,
> assiso — in mezzo scuro, luce rade.
> For d'ogne fraude, — dico, degno in fede,
> che solo di costui nasce mercede!

Love is "divided from being" (*d'essere diviso*; line 68): as an accident, it only *is* through the being of something else, and so it is divided or alienated from the locus of its being. As Aristotle says: "There cannot be anything white which is not white through being something different." A white log is a *log*, not a *white*; a loving human is a *human*, not a *loving*.

For di colore ("lacking color"; line 68) functions in part as a reiteration of the kind of accidentality indicated by line 64's *bianco . . . cade* ("white . . . fails"). But more than that, *for di colore* works with the medium (*mezzo*), darkness (*scuro*), and light (*luce*) of line 69 to reintroduce the analogy involving the diaphanous and light with which Cavalcanti opened the treatise. Recall the analogy commonly deployed in Arabic Aristotelianism to illustrate the ontological status and relation between the Active Intellect and the Possible Intellect. The Active Intellect is to the Possible Intellect as light is to a diaphanous medium: the former makes the latter actual, and in doing so the former makes those things contained in the latter actually visible. In the case of optics, what is made visible are the *colors* of the physical substances located within the dimensions of the diaphanous medium. These colors are the analogue for intelligible forms, which are made visible in the Possible Intellect by the illumination provided by the Active Intellect.

Now, there are four components of this analogy: the physical substance; its color; the medium; light. Cavalcanti reintroduces the analogy

to say something about love, and one should ask to which of these components is love analogous. We can rule out the substance, since we have been told several times that love is an accident not a substance. We can rule out the color, since we are told that love is not color (*for di colore*). We can rule out the medium, since we are told that love is seated or set *in* a medium (*mezzo*). All that remains is light.

Love is somehow akin to light. What I am driving at here is the restoration of the meaning of *luce rade* (line 68), which modern commentaries have cast to the brink of oblivion. There are two ways to read the literal sense of this phrase. Nowadays the consensus reading—which has nearly eliminated the alternative, is this: "it [i.e., love] razes/excludes/eliminates light."[225] In this case, *luce* is a noun and the grammatical object of the verb *rade* (*radere*: to raze/to shave [off]), with love (the implied "it") as the grammatical subject. In keeping with the presupposition that *Donna me prega* proclaims love's irrationality, *luce rade* is taken to mean that love eliminates the light of reason or excludes the light of knowledge.[226] But one ought to ask: in a dark medium (*in mezzo scuro*), what light is there to eliminate? How might love raze what is not there? This leads us to embrace the seldom mentioned alternative: that *luce rade* means "it [i.e., love] seldom shines."[227] In this case, *luce* is a verb (*lucere*: to shine) and *rade* (modern Italian *di rado*) is an adverb meaning "seldom," "rarely," "infrequently."

There are two ways to regard the assertion that "love shines infrequently." One way is to emphasize the negative: love scarcely shines because it has little light or is the contrary of light.[228] This reading attempts to avoid acknowledging that love *does* shine. The second way is, indeed, to acknowledge that fact: love is akin to a kind of light that shines. Love *shines*.

But how can this be, if love's setting is a dark medium? We have seen the answer, near the beginning of our commentary. Before turning there, we should insist that it is not true that there is no light in a dark medium or that a dark medium "does not let light pass through."[229] If such were the case, then the medium—whatever it may be—would not be a medium. In truth, there *must* be light in a dark medium, because of the strange ontological status of a medium: it only comes into existence as such, it only *is*, when it is illuminated. Love, set or situated (*assiso*; line 68) in a dark medium, makes that medium a medium only through love's shining.

Recall Aristotle's remark (improved on in Averroes's commentary) that certain things are perceived through a dark medium; such things "in light are invisible but in darkness cause sense-perception." Averroes mentions "several kinds of animals" (one can think, for instance, of fireflies) and stars as examples of things that "are seen in the dark but not in light." Such things are luminous: their light comes from within as the shining of an internal principle. Something seen in a diaphanous medium

is seen on account of an illumination that comes from without: the external light that passes through or into the medium. Something seen in a dark medium is seen on account of luminosity that comes from within. Love—like the hemisphere of light shining from the philosophers (who are set in darkness) of Dante's Limbo—is the radiant luminosity from within of the rational animal's soul (a soul that, necessarily enmattered, is "dark"). Love is the light of reason.

But, as it happens, that light is seldom seen. One need only think of the state of the world as portrayed in Dante's *Comedy* to recognize that, from Cavalcanti's perspective, the rational animal's soul is for the most part merely potential and rarely actual: "love rarely shines" (line 68).

When it does shine, however, the rational animal has attained its happiness: the actual operation of rationality. Happiness, for Aristotle, is the very activity itself—for its own sake and not for some other end—of the highest human power. Thus, Cavalcanti closes the treatise by indicating that the recompense for loving is loving itself: *solo di costui nasce mercede* ("[the] reward comes only/simply from this [i.e., from loving itself]"; line 70).[230] One does not habitually engage in ethical *praxis* in order to earn some reward other and higher than such *praxis* (bear in mind that in the Middle Ages the phrase "rewards and punishments" is synonymous with salvation in heaven and damnation in hell) but rather for its own sake. The highest human happiness resides in the ethical activity known as loving. Aristotle would perhaps not laugh if he were to hear Cavalcanti say that love is happiness.

Congedo
Tu puoi sicuramente gir, canzone,
72 là 've te piace, ch'io t'ho sì adornata
ch'assai laudata — sarà tua **ragione**
da le persone — ch'hanno intendimento.
75 Di star con l'altre tu non hai talento.

(Song, you can surely [or, safely: *sicuramente*] go where you please, for I have so adorned you that your discourse/reasoning [***ragione***] will be greatly praised by those persons who have understanding. You have no desire to be with the others.)

With the *congedo*, not part of the treatise proper, the canzone returns to the easy stylistic register in which it opened. These verses are straightforward and need little glossing. We ought to note, however, the element of play involving line 21's *sicuramente*: the canzone can *surely* (i.e., certainly) go where it pleases; or, the canzone can go anywhere without fear, *securely* (i.e., safely). If a late medieval poem that denies the immortality of the human soul and proclaims that a good life on earth is its own (and only) reward can circulate anywhere safely, this is only

because it has been properly "adorned": its meaning has been cloaked in colors and figures. But in this case, these are not figures of rhetoric but figures of reasoning, rendered so difficult that only a few, those who *hanno intendimento* (line 74), will understand. Is it mere accident that the central verse here (the third of five) ends with *ragione*—that is, with the very subject matter of the poem's central stanza (the third of five)? Those who have understanding understand that Cavalcanti's discourse (*ragione*) is above all a discourse on *ragione* (reason): that a treatise on love is a treatise on the rational.

Notes

1 Bruno Nardi, *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Bari: Laterza, 1949), 106: "Love . . . is a blind passion of the sensitive appetite" and "a clouding over of reason"; love "blocks reason and is caused in us by one of those malign [external] influences that are impossible to resist" (110). Savona, *Per un commento*, 98: love is "a passion that is not regulated and controlled by reason and that consequently impedes the 'rational' life of whoever is at the mercy of this passion." Corti, *Scritti*, 33–34: the "true essence of love is *inordinata concupiscentia* . . . [which] alienates man from the *perfectum bonum* to such a degree [that] he no longer knows how to *agere secundum rectam rationem*." Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 97: "Cavalcanti divorce[s] love from reason." Enrico Malato, *Dante e Guido Cavalcanti* (Rome: Salerno, 1997), 38: "Love answers to a natural impulse, but it occurs as an overwhelming passion that, if reason (which keeps that passion under control) does not intervene to assist, leads to death." Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, 84: love "derives from [a] power . . . that is not rational but sensitive and that blocks the activity of judgment. . . . Love, because it is a passion, is detached from human choice." Federica Anichini, *Voices of the Body: Liminal Grammar in Guido Cavalcanti's 'Rime'* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2009), 78: "Human beings, when acted upon by love, are driven by 'intention' rather than guided by rationality." Francesco Fioretti, *Ethos e leggiadria: Lo stilnovo dialogico di Dante, Guido e Cino da Pistoia* (Rome: Aracne Editrice, 2012), 132: "Love . . . expands in the sensitive soul as a hypertrophy of the imagination, which in turn obfuscates the individual's capacity for judgment: one who is thus affected . . . finds it difficult to act rationally." Gessani, *Dante, Guido Cavalcanti*, 202: "Cavalcanti operates in a dualistic space . . . : on one side he locates desires, passions, love, on the other rationality and morality." Natascia Tonelli, *Fisiologia della passione: Poesia d'amore e medicina da Cavalcanti a Boccaccio* (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2015), 42: Love for Cavalcanti is "that unhealthy error of judgment that leads reason astray." Grimaldi (Alighieri), *Nuova edizione*, 533: "Love is . . . irrational and destructive [and] leads to death." Symptomatic of the stranglehold that this notion, which is to a large degree a product of hearsay rather than engagement with the text, has on interpretation of the canzone is the fact that even Jean-Baptiste Brenet, a truly superb Averroes scholar, does not disagree: in a brief chapter on *Donna me prega* in his *Averroès l'inquiétant* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2015), Brenet says that the poem "offers a negative vision of love, the darkness of which seems, here and there, to be grounded in an anthropology inspired by Averroes" (41).

2 Averroes, *Long Commentary on Aristotle's 'Metaphysics Book Lamda*,' Text 14 (1474); trans. Charles Genequand, *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: A Translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd's Commentary on Aristotle's 'Metaphysics'*, *Book Lām* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 98.

3 The uppercase letters in this scheme represent the stanza's end rhymes, and the lowercase letters represent internal rhymes; each stanza has 14 verses and is divided formally into two parts: first, a pair of tercets (BDE, BDE), followed by a pair of quatrains (FGHH, FGHH). *R/I* (151) points out several instances of rich rhyme: *senza* (8) and *essenza* (12); *memora* (15) and *demora* (18); *torna* (44) and *storna* (47); *viso* (63) and *diviso* (67); *rade* (68) and *fraude* (69). *DeR* (94), citing an observation by Ezra Pound, points out that in each stanza 52 of 154 syllables are rendered obligatory by the rhyme scheme. On Cavalcanti's effort to display, with this canzone, technical mastery rivaling Guittone d'Arezzo's, see Capelli (Guittone d'Arezzo), *Del carnale amore*, 141–147.

4 There is general consensus that an immediate catalyst for Cavalcanti's representing *Donna me prega* as a response to a request is in part motivated by Guido Orlandi's sonnet *Onde si move e donde nasce Amore?*, a poem addressed to Cavalcanti that poses a series of questions on love (many of which are treated in Guido's canzone). Favati (*Inchiesta*, 101–105) argues that Orlandi's sonnet was in fact written after *Donna me prega* and is meant to chide Cavalcanti for certain alleged contradictions between it and other poems in his lyric corpus. For a concise history of the question, see Gennaro Sasso, *Dante, Guido, e Francesca* (Rome: Viella, 2008), 93n15.

5 For a selection of the now abundant and rapidly expanding bibliography on the question of the chronological relation between *Vita nuova* and *Donna me prega* in the context of a presumed ideological dissension between the "two eyes" of late Duecento Florence, see Rea, "La *Vita nuova*," 351n1–3.

6 *Vita nuova* 18.6; *Nuova edizione*, 155.

7 *Vita nuova* 20.4; *Nuova edizione,* 170–171.

8 See Gessani, *Dante, Guido Cavalcanti*, 63–65.

9 Malato (*Dante e Guido Cavalcanti*, 14) maintains that the two works "expound two radically different and diametrically opposed views on love"; Enrico Fenzi remarks that Dante's views in *Vita nuova* "could not be more radically distant and opposed" to those of Cavalcanti in *Donna me prega* (*La canzone d'amore di Guido Cavalcanti e i suoi antichi commenti* [Genova, Il Melangolo, 1999], 19); Pirovano (*Il dolce stil nuovo*, 239) calls Guido's canzone a "radical refutation of Dante's ideology as expressed in the *Vita nuova*."

10 "The negativity that Dante worked so hard to negate is expressed most explicitly and theoretically in the famous canzone *Donna me prega*, where Guido assigns love to the faculty of soul that is *non razionale, ma che sente* ('not rational, but which feels'), that is, to the seat of the passions, the sensitive soul, with the result that love deprives us of reason and judgment, discerns poorly, and induces vice, so that *Di sua potenza segue spesso morte* ('from its power death often follows')"; Teodolinda Barolini, "Dante and the Lyric Past," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 22.

11 *Vita nuova* 2.9; *Nuova edizione*, 86.

12 As Aristotle says, "The accidental is attributed to what belongs to something and what it is true to say, but not of necessity or for the most part" (*Metaphysics* 6, 1025a 14–15; trans. Richard Hope [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952], 121).

13 "Accidents of the soul" functioned in medieval medical treatises to signify what we now call "emotion." Referring to *amor hereos* ("heroic [or: erotic] love"), Peter of Spain remarks: "All accidents of the soul [i.e., emotions] are a passion of the heart, since all accidents of the soul follow the heart. But a*mor hereos* is an accident. Thus it is a passion of the heart" (*Questiones super Viaticum*; trans. mine, from the Latin text in Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990], 216). Certain *tenzoni* of the Sicilian School pose the question whether love exists as a thing in its own right. In *Vita nuova* 25.1 (*Nuova edizione*, 207) Dante, asserting that love is "not in itself a substance, but an accident in a substance," justifies his habit of speaking of love "as if it were a thing in itself, and not only a thinking substance but also a corporeal substance" by claiming poetic license to use such a "figure of speech or rhetorical color" (25.7; 211).

14 See Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, 48–49.

15 Yet, ignoring this fact, commentators copiously claim that *Donna me prega* is above all else a condemnation of love because it is *passion*. Barolini's remarks are exemplary of the erroneous notion that Guido's canzone is a poem about passion:

> [Cavalcanti and Dante] hold that *passion* takes our faculties out of alignment, permitting desire to govern reason rather than the other way around. . . . Dante is passionate about the role of reason, in a precise inversion of Cavalcanti, who is cool [i.e., rational] about *passion*.
> (*Dante and the Origins*, 81, 97; emphases added)

Evidence that Cavalcanti might well have said "passion" rather than "accident" in line 2—if he had not consciously chosen *not* to—is provided by the sonnet *Molti volendo dir che fosse amore*, a poem (possibly composed by Dante) that purports to tell "the truth" (*il vero*; line 3) about what love is: "Io dico che amor non è *sustanza*/né cosa corporal ch'abbia figura,/anzi è *passïone* in disïanza" ("I say that love is not a *substance*/nor a physical thing that has a shape/but is *passion* in desire"; lines 9–11); for the text of this sonnet, see Pirovano, *Il dolce stil novo*, 161–162. Here *passïone* functions as the counterpart for Cavalcanti's "accident" in the Aristotelian substance/accident distinction.

16 As Robert Miner points all, Aquinas thinks that emotions such as love and joy "are not *passiones*, they are *affectiones*" (*Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 37). Simo Knuuttila shows that Albertus Magnus regards "emotions [as both] passions, in being causally dependent qualities, *and* actions, in being motive acts"; *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 239; emphasis added. Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* I–II.1.3) remarks that "human acts can be looked at in both ways [i.e., 'as actions or as passions'], since human beings *move* themselves and a*re moved* by themselves." Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on Happiness: The Treatise on Human Acts*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2016), 6; emphasis added.

17 Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, 52.

18 Trans. mine, from the Latin text in Fenzi, *La canzone*, 90.

19 Fenzi, *La canzone*, 91.

20 There is no basis for Barolini's contention (*Dante and the Origins*, 81) that with *Donna me prega* Cavalcanti delivers a message concerning "the very

nature of love: all love"; and there is even less foundation for her claim that "the very nature of love" for Cavalcanti is equivalent to "the very definition of lust."

21 Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* I–II.28.6):

> Love is the cause of desire and sadness and pleasure and so of all the other passions. Therefore, every action that arises from any passion whatsoever arises from love as from its first cause. . . . Even hatred is caused by love.
>
> Trans. mine, from the Latin text in Tomasso d'Aquino, *Le passioni e l'amore: Summa Theologiae, I–II, Questioni 22[a]–28[a]*, ed. Umberto Galeazzi (Milan: Bompiani, 2012), 230

In this article Aquinas is in effect defending the claim—that he attributes to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*—that "everything that man does, he does as a result of love."

22 For *è sì altero*, *R/I* (152) suggests "is indeed of noble nature"; *DeR* (96) takes the end of line 2 and line 3 to mean: "it is of such power (*fero*), is elevated (*altero*) to such a degree, that it is given the solemn name 'love'"; see also Cassata, *Rime*, 133. Grimaldi (Alighieri, *Nuova edizione*, 537–538) presents evidence for both the positive and negative readings of *altero*.

23 Trans. mine, from the Italian text in Fenzi, *La canzone*, 190–191.

24 Pseudo-Egidius:

> [Cavalcanti] also says that [love] is the most noble and the most virtuous accident that there is in the soul, and so such a name is right and proper for it. Thus, he says that it is called 'love' because this name 'love' suits the most noble and most virtuous accident of the soul.
>
> Trans. mine, from the Italian text in Fenzi, *La canzone*, 190–191

Modern commentators are divided over whether lines 2–3 are saying "an accident that is often *fero* and is indeed *altero*, that is called 'love'" or, rather: "an accident that is often *fero* and is so *altero* that it is called 'love'"; in the latter case, the name "love" is given to the accident *because* it is so *altero*. For both sides of the question, see Grimaldi's gloss in *Nuova edizione*, 537–538.

25 "Amor per tal ragione sta 'n cor gentile/per qual lo foco in cima del doplero:/splendeli al su' diletto, clar, sottile;/no li stari' altra guisa, tant'è *fero*" ("Love dwells in the noble heart for the same reason/that fire remains at the top of a multi-candled torch:/it shines there to its own delight, bright and pure/[and] it wouldn't have it any other way, [since] it is so unflinching [*fero*]"); lines 21–24; Guinizelli, *Rime*, ed. Pelosi, 39; Pelosi glosses *fero* as "indomitable."

26 Aristotle, *De anima* 403a28–29: "The study of the soul [i.e., psychology] . . . must fall within the science of nature [i.e., physics]."

27 For the claim that *Donna me prega*'s coherence and its content primarily reflect late medieval medical treatises on lovesickness and that the canzone's Averroism is tangential, restricted to a few verses in Stanza 2, see Natascia Tonelli, *Fisiologia della passione: Poesia d'amore e medicina da Cavalcanti a Boccaccio* (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2015). Tonelli's exposition of the medical tradition is thorough and valuable, and there is no doubt that Cavalcanti was well versed in and engaged with that tradition. But he engages with it not merely as a purveyor of outmoded commonplaces but rather in the mode of an ironist, repurposing it, writing

against it, and showing it to be mere child's play. For example, the ubiquitous appearance of the term "cogitation" in the medical treatises, where that term just means thinking about something repeatedly or obsessively, becomes in *Donna me prega* the unspoken essence of love, Averroes's cogitative faculty (as we will see below). Besides the reduction of Cavalcanti's philosophical psychology to physiology, the primary flaw of Tonelli's approach is her interpreting *intentio* as Avicenna's estimative faculty rather than as a general term for a spiritual form. We will say more on this below, when treating line 21. For a very recent consideration of the medical approach to *Donna me prega* (which I have not had a chance to consult), see Aurélien Robert, "Un Averroïsme medical? Cavalcanti et Dante face à la passion amoureuse," in *Dante et l'Averroïsme*, ed. Alain de Libera, Jean-Baptiste Brenet, and Irène Rosier-Catach (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2019), 269–305.

28 For line 28, I am using Savona's text (*Per un commento*, 23).

29 *DA* 408b25–30. Aristotle, *On the Soul and Other Psychological Works*, trans. Fred D. Miller, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 14; translation slightly modified; emphasis added.

30 *LC*, 79.

31 For the elevated status of specifically human memory in Averroes's account (as in effect the faculty that preserves meanings and performs operations of thinking by retrieving them and composing them with other meanings)—in short, as the locus of our rationality, see Carla di Martino, *Ratio Particularis: Doctrines des sens internes d'Avicenne à Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2008), 48–55.

32 As Anca Vasiliu explains in her thorough study of the diaphanous in Ancient Greek and medieval philosophy, for Aristotle

> the *diaphanous* is explicitly an essential condition for vision, but . . . remains in itself invisible. . . . Thus, the *diaphanous* in itself is nothing: it has no proper quiddity distinct from the objects which appear *through* it or the light that manifests itself *in* it—no ontic status and no visibility of its own.
>
> *Du diaphane* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1997), 46

33 As Ardizzone acutely remarks (*Guido Cavalcanti*, 58), "Cavalcanti utilizes the theory of the diaphanous . . . as a metaphor in order to furnish a physical demonstration of the separation between the sensitive and the intellectual soul."

34 *LC*, 328.

35 *LC*, 183:

> Hence, [Aristotle] likens [*assimilat*] light to the Active Intellect and colors to universals [i.e., intelligibles]. For what is brought forth by example and in a general way [*large*: 'liberally,' 'loosely'] is not like what is brought forth by demonstration. In the case of an example, the intention is only to make something evident, not to provide verification.

36 Why does Cavalcanti associate love with Mars rather than with Venus? Nardi (*Dante e la cultura*, 109) endorses the gloss of the early fourteenth-century commentator Dino del Garbo, who brushes the question aside by reducing Mars to Venus—that is, to sexual desire:

> In fact [Cavalcanti] says that this passion [i.e., love] proceeds from Mars, just as do the astrologers when they posit that if someone is born

> while Mars is in the house of Venus and, if [Mars] imprints his seal on this birth, it will follow that the person born will be lustful, a fornicator, and guilty of every sort of venereal abuse.
>
> (Dino del Garbo, in Fenzi, *La canzone*, 96–97)

This interpretation is emblematic of the whole tradition of critical reception of *Donna me prega*, which has betrayed Cavalcanti's conception of love (Mars) by reducing it to lust (Venus).

37 *DA* 418b19–31.
38 *Letter on Intellect*, 74.
39 *DA* 403a16–403b18. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. Miller, 3–4.
40 *LC*, 186.
41 Favati's remarks on Cavalcanti's Mars (*Inchiesta*, 219) are right on target: "I just don't think that *scuritate* ['darkness'] alludes to a 'malignant influence' of the planet Mars, but simply to its efficacy, which is that of instilling *ira* [=irascible desire], which is the foundation of all non-animalistic love." Intriguingly, Favati reads "darkness" as *umbra* or shadow: the progressive darkening or weakening of the pure metaphysical light emanating from God, which when it descends through the cosmos sufficiently is able to interact with and influence the physical world.
42 *DA* 419a1–5.
43 *LC*, 186.
44 *R/I* (152), for philological reasons, retains *chi* but then dehumanizes it, claiming that *che* would make more sense and that *chi* must be a personification (and so in actuality a "what" rather than a "who") of line 21's *veduta forma* ("seen form").
45 TLIO (http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/TLIO/, entry: "costumanza"), quoting from Brunetto's *Rettorica*. Indeed, "customs and virtues" function for Brunetto as another name for ethics: in the dedication preceding his compendium of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, he characterizes his work as a "portrait of customs and moral virtues" (*pertratta di costume e virtu morali*); *L'Ethica d'Aristotile ridotta in compendio da Ser Brunetto Latini* (Lyon, 1568).
46 *LC*, 416.
47 Nardi, *Dante e la cultura*, 106.
48 See Michał Oleksowicz, "Aristotle on the Heart and Brain," *European Journal of Science and Theology* 14 (2018): 77–94. For the brain's refrigerative function, see Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* 652a31–652b27.
49 *DA* 432b27–31; trans. (slightly modified) Miller, 63. Does the fact that Aristotle says "it is the heart that is moved" mean that the heart is passive (the moved object) not active (the mover)? The answer is, definitively, no: he is saying that the heart is *moved to act*—to assume its role as active agent. For a very fine account of the "circularity"—a description borrowed from Aquinas—of the psychological process of cogitative desire, see Don A. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 172–179. The bottom line is that "properly speaking, *cogitatio* . . . is in fact an *action*. . . . The *passio* that is love is thus the result of an *actio*" on the part of the desiring subject (177); Aquinas characterizes *actio* ("doing," from *agere*) as "an activity abiding in the agent, such as to see, *to will*, and the like" (*Summa Theologiae* I-II.57.4; quoted in Monson).
50 To avoid confusion, I have omitted the latter part of the last sentence of the quoted passage from *DA*. Aristotle's text reads: "It is the heart that is moved, or in the case of a pleasant object some other part." It is not entirely clear what this means, and we witness Averroes struggling to make sense

of it: "It is this way in the manuscript, [but] perhaps there is [something] missing from this" (*LC*, 411). At any rate, consulting another translation, Averroes proposes the following: "[When] the heart . . . cogitates regarding something desirable, then a member different from the heart is moved with the motion of desire" (*LC*, 412). In this way Averroes is able to insist that, in the case of voluntary desire, the heart is the cogitating agent (i.e., the desiring subject), while other body parts are passive objects of motion: the heart is the mover, while a member other than the heart is the moved. We should also mention that Aquinas, glossing this very passage from *DA*, understands Aristotle to be endorsing "Plato's view . . . that irascible desire, which has to do with fear, is in the heart, and the concupiscible is in some other part of the body"; Thomas Aquinas, *A Commentary on Aristotle's 'De anima'*, trans. Robert Pasnau (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 3.14, 401.

51 Rachel Jacoff ("Rereading *Donna me prega*," in *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori*, ed. Maria Luisa Ardizzone [Firenze: Cadmo, 2003]) points to Stanza 2 as an example of the more general fact that the canzone's "grammatical ambiguities" make it "difficult to determine the [grammatical] subject at certain key points" (76). Jacoff, recognizing that love is not the subject throughout, expresses the stanza's philosophical gist perfectly:

> In the second stanza, *In quella parte* first introduces a statement about memory [line 15], and then [in line 24], the same phrase opens a discussion of another subject, the [P]ossible [I]ntellect. The identical phrases—*in quella parte*—point to two very different entities, the sensitive soul and the Possible Intellect, entities whose radical disjunction rather than their relationship is precisely the point.
>
> (78)

52 *LC*, 244.

53 Ardizzone (*Guido Cavalcanti*, 59), for example, translates the line thus: "it derives from a seen form that is intellected."

54 The recent anti-Averroist commentaries of both Tonelli (*Fisiologia della passione*) and Fioretti (*Ethos e leggiadria*) rely heavily on taking *intentio* to mean Avicenna's estimation. For a very recent effort to deny Cavalcanti's Averroism, see Paolo Falzone, "L'Averroïsme du 'premier ami' de Dante? Relecture critique d'une vulgate historiographique," in *Dante et l'Averroïsme*, ed. Alain de Libera, Jean-Baptiste Brenet, and Irène Rosier-Catach (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2019), 235–268. Falzone's interesting essay was published just days before I sent the present work to press for production, and so I have not had time to give it the careful consideration that it deserves. Although, obviously, I could not disagree more with his main thesis, Falzone's remarks on *Donna me prega*'s treatment of the cogitative faculty appear very insightful; I would suggest that his recognition that Cavalcanti is talking about cogitation offers support for my Averroist approach.

55 See Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*, 129. John Blund's account (ca. 1204) offers an especially clear definition of Avicenna's *intentio*:

> By *intentio* the commentator [i.e., Avicenna] means a singular quality which does not reach the senses and is either harmful or good for the [perceiving] thing: harmful like the attribute which is in the wolf on account of which the sheep flees from the wolf; good like the attribute which is in the [mother] sheep and on account of which it is approached by its lamb.
>
> Quoted in Hasse, 145

56 In Wack, *Lovesickness*, 219.
57 Ibid., 216–217.
58 Francesco Bottin, *Filosofia medievale della mente* (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2005), 213.
59 Ibid., 212.
60 On this identity in Averroes, see Leen Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis: From Perception to Knowledge*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 92.
61 For a superb account, see Guido Giglioni, "Phantasms of Reason and Shadows of Matter: Averroes's Notion of the Imagination and Its Renaissance Interpreters," in *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anna Akasoy and Guido Giglioni (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 173–193.
62 On Stanza 2's representation of an "itinerary of spiritualization, from the concrete particular entity to the abstract universal" that "terminates its voyage in the Possible Intellect," see Gagliardi, *Guido Cavalcanti e Dante*, 36–37.
63 Corti's otherwise outstanding commentary is largely ruined by her reading of line 21's *s'intende* as "is intellected," since she claims, strangely and in violation of the principles of Aristotelian empiricism, that Cavalcanti is saying that love's cause is an intelligible form. This leads her to Platonize the canzone at various points. For instance, she claims that Cavalcanti says that love is caused by "an exemplary figure of love . . . , a model with universal value" but then is tarnished by that model's "descent and fall into the darkness of passion" (*Scritti*, 30–31). Even more strangely, just after these remarks she speaks disapprovingly of "erroneous readings of the canzone in a Neoplatonic key." Corti's interpretation seems to be the source of Robert Pogue Harrison's claims concerning *Donna me prega*: "While the woman *inspires* love, she cannot answer its longings. For Cavalcanti, the beloved is nothing more than a bewitching illusion. She *seems* to possess in her person the ideal beauty that love desires, but in truth the beauty she manifests does not belong to her at all. Like all ideal qualities (truth, virtue, beatitude), her beauty belongs to a radically transcendent realm of universality which has no substantial links with the realm of materiality (this, in a highly over-simplified formula, is Cavalcanti's so-called Averroism). . . . This is a form of Platonism, to be sure"; "Approaching the *Vita nuova*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. Rachell Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 39–40. One can only wonder what Averroes would have thought on hearing that Averroism is a kind of Platonism.
64 Commentators who are *not* confused by this and who provide valuable clarification of the scheme of Stanza 2 include Gagliardi, *Guido Cavalcanti e Dante*, 37; Fenzi, *La canzone*, 147–150; Sasso, *Dante, Guido e Francesca*, 57–58; Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, 114–118.
65 Savona (*Per un commento*, 39) reads the word as *pesanza* and interprets the line to mean that the Possible Intellect cannot be subject to passions—"pain" or "grief" standing as a synecdoche for passions in general. Fenzi (*La canzone*, 147–148) reads it as *possanza*, interpreting the line to mean that love has no power to alter the Possible Intellect in any way, since the latter, although receptive of forms, is not linked to the body and is not affected by its qualities. Gagliardi (*Guido Cavalcanti e Dante*, 38) prefers *posanza* and takes line 24 to mean that love, as an operation of the sensitive soul, never has a place in the Possible Intellect.

66 Averroes explains that the four *qualities* (hot, dry, moist, cold) are the prior fundamental principles of the four elements (that is, of fire, earth, water, air) and hence of all material bodies:

> Since it is evident that [hot, dry, moist, cold] do not revert to one another nor are they prior to one another, it is evident that these four qualities [*qualitates*] must constitute the differentiae of the primary bodies [i.e. of the four elements].
>
> Averroes, *On Aristotle's 'De Generatione et Corruptione': Middle Commentary and Epitome*, trans. Samuel Kurland (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1958), 75

67 *DA* 429a26; emphasis added.
68 *LC*, 330.
69 Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 8.7; trans. Marmura, 297.
70 Stanley B. Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency: The Moral Philosophy of Albert the Great* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 95.
71 Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 4.2; trans. Marmura, 142.
72 This line's *in sé* indicates that this is a characterization of the Intellect *in itself*—that is, without reference to its relations with anything external such as the human soul. Treating what he calls a question concerning *intellectus in se* ("intellect in itself"), the Parisian Averroist Siger of Brabant asks: "Whether [the] intellect is eternal or created as something new [i.e., created at a certain moment in time]." He replies that Aristotle seems to teach that the intellect is eternal and judges this teaching more probable than the view (represented, for Siger, by Augustine) that the intellect is created in time. Intellect in itself differs from the human soul, which in itself is not endowed with intellect but with sensitive and vegetative powers; this is the difference between the *perpetual* (line 26) and the mortal: "But the [I]ntellect is in fact separate from the vegetative and the sensitive just as the perpetual [*perpetuum*] differs from the corruptible"; *Quaestiones in Tertium De anima* q. 2; Sigieri di Brabante, *Anima dell'uomo* (Milano: Bompiani, 2007), 84–86. Fioretti's effort not simply to diminish but to eradicate *Donna me prega*'s Averroism by replacing it with Avicennan doctrines relies on a highly dubious claim involving this perpetual shining. Fioretti claims that the mere mention of "possible intellect" in Stanza 2 has sent commentators, excited by the specter of Averroes, on a wild goose chase, when in fact there is nothing Averroist in the canzone. Following the path trod by Favati in his heated polemic with Nardi several decades ago, Fioretti asserts that Cavalcanti has in mind Aquinas's notion that the possible intellect is part of the individual human's rational soul. Fioretti wants us to think that line 26's *perpetual effetto* means "perpetually in act once fixed [in the individual's possible intellect] by the Active Intellect" (*Ethos e leggiadria*, 127). Yet it is none other than Avicenna, the very authority with whom Fioretti would replace Averroes, who explicitly and forcefully denies that intelligible forms can be perpetually in act in the human intellect:

> I [i.e., Avicenna] say when [the human intellect] searches for intelligibles, it ponders, and when it has found them it directs itself, whenever it wishes, away from corporeal things and toward the Intelligence [i.e., the Active Intellect] and conjoins with it. If t*he intelligibles are not*

> *constantly actually represented in the [human intellect], this is because our soul is devoid of intelligible forms*; if this were not the case they would actually be represented [in the human intellect]. But intelligibles do not have a storehouse, such as memory, in the rational soul, since memory's only objects are sense-perceptible things. On the contrary, the [rational] soul is sometimes in conjunction, sometimes not in conjunction, [with the Active Intellect].
>
> Avicenna, *Commentary on the 'Theology of Aristotle'*, trans. Georges Vadja, "Les notes d'Avicenne sur la *Theologie d'Aristote*" Revue Thomiste 51 (1951): 406

73 *Rhetoric* 1370a27–31.

74 *LC*, 77–78. For valuable commentary on *consideratio* as theoretical contemplation/speculation, see Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, 111–112 (although the quotes that she attributes there to Averroes are in fact from the text of Aristotle on which Averroes is commenting). See also Gagliardi, *Guido Cavalcanti e Dante*, 39–40.

75 *R/I*, 156.

76 *R/I* (156) mentions three of these: Inglese's own (love offers no similarity—it cannot be compared with—anything else); Fenzi's (the Intellect cannot offer anything corresponding to what takes place in the sensitive soul); Gentili's (the Intellect cannot generate anything similar to itself; it is radically inalterable).

77 See Gagliardi, *Guido Cavalcanti e Dante*, 41.

78 "No doubt, Averroes's universe was in the end an Aristotelian universe. One might safely say that it is one of the most radical attempts to apply Aristotelian principles to the understanding of reality. In this Aristotelian universe, every aspect of reality, with the exception of the unmovable mover, is in the process of being actualized. In the ascending ladder of being each form serves as *matter* for the next form of a higher ontological level"; Giglioni, "Phantasms of Reason," 193.

79 "As to the question why the imaginative faculty does not present in most cases the actual individual intention [*veram intentionem individualem*] [of the thing] which comes under the universal endowed by the intellect, but presents an intention similar to it [*intentionem similem illi*], the answer is that this will occur because the sense-object has two forms: a *spiritual form, which is the form that is similar* to it [*forma similis*]; and a corporeal form, which is the form of the sense-object itself, not the form that is similar to it [*non forma similis*]. And the form that is similar to it [*forma similis*] is indeed more similar [*magis similis*] because it is closer to the nature of the universal than the form of the actual thing" (emphasis added). Averroes, *Epitome of 'Parva Naturalia*,' trans. Harry Blumberg (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1961), 47; emphases added. The Latin text in brackets is from Averroes, *Compendia librorum Aristotelis qui Parva Naturalia vocantur* (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1949).

80 The two opening sections of Averroes's *LC* provide the model for Stanza 2's underlying scheme: the division between human *qua* human and Intellect *qua* Intellect. In the first (1.1), psychology is granted "a position of priority among all subjects" of science," with "divine science"—i.e., metaphysics: *scientiam divinam*—bracketed out of consideration; in the second (1.2), psychology is said to provide the principles for "the final end of human beings considered as human beings" and to provide explanations for "many other things" concerning "Intelligence considered as Intelligence and Intellect" (2–3).

81 The notion that *Donna me prega* asserts that *love* causes our failure to attain intellection is very widely held by commentators on the canzone. Giorgio Inglese, for example, says that "the effect of love is the impossibility of *intelligere* [i.e., of our intellecting]" and that "love . . . 'kills' by the fact that it inheres in the sensitive soul with such intensity that it impedes the power called *cogitativa* from entering into contact with the intellect"; "Dubbi d'amore," in *Alle origini dell'Io lirico: Cavalcanti o dell'interiorità*, ed. R. Antonelli (Rome: Viella, 2001), 148–149. For other instances of this "love blocks intellection" interpretation of the canzone, see, for example, Fenzi, "Interpretazioni cavalcantiane,"; Fenzi, *La canzone*, 147; Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, 35 ("the being of love makes it difficult or impossible to attain an intellectual life"); Inglese, *L'intelletto*, 26; Grimaldi (Alighieri), *Nuova edizione*, 533; *R/I*, 157. For a trenchant critique of this "love blocks intellection" interpretation, see Sasso, *Dante, Guido*, 57–58.

82 I seriously doubt Barolini's claim that "there can be no doubt that the love Guido professes in *Donna me prega* is diametrically opposed to the love Dante professes in the *Commedia*. Cavalcanti aligns love and death, Dante love and life" (*Dante and the Origins*, 80). As we will see soon, Cavalcanti does *not* align love and death (the notion that he does so stems from a fatal misreading of line 35); rather, he aligns love and life. Enrico Malato ("Lettura del canto XVI del *Purgatorio*," in his *Studi su Dante: "Lecturae Dantis," chiose e altre note dantesche* [Cittadella: Bertoncello Artigrafiche, 2006], 216–257), similarly insisting on the stark contrast between Cavalcanti's and Dante's views on love, provides an exemplary instance of this conventional (but, as we will see in *The Salvation of Intellect*, false) opposition between the two poets.

83 402a6–7.

84 For Averroes, the two branches of politics in a general sense are (1) ethics and (2) politics in a specific sense. Ethics provides general principles regarding political happiness, while politics in a specific sense treats the general means by which to put those principles into practice; see Frédérique Woerther, *Le plaisir, le bonheur, et l'acquisition des vertus: Édition du Livre X du Commentaire moyen d'Averroès à l'*Éthique à Nicomaque *d'Aristote* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 111–118.

85 *LC*, 2–3; emphasis added.

86 *Politics* 1334b19–24.

87 *NE* 1102b25–28. On the rationality of emotion in Aristotle, see W. W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 2002). For a comprehensive account of Aristotle's theory of emotions, see Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 24–47. On Aristotle's status as the most influential precursor (and, more than that, "the source of [the] central thesis") of contemporary Anglo-American cognitivist theories of emotion, which challenge the solidity of the boundary between emotion and reason, see John Deigh, "Concepts of Emotions in Modern Philosophy and Psychology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 26. Nicolas E. Lombardo's *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011) offers a concise yet impressively thorough overview of Anglo-American cognitivist philosophy of emotion as it has developed over the past five decades (8–15); he singles out as central to cognitivist accounts "the idea that emotions necessarily involve rational judgment" (11–12).

88 See Carlo Natali, *The Wisdom of Aristotle*, trans. Gerald Parks (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 57.

89 *NE* 1139b4–5.

90 *NE* 1139a4–8.
91 1140a32; 1140b5; 1143b23; 1143b19.
92 See H. J. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity: Interpretations of the "De anima"* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 151–170.
93 Averroes, *Averroes's Tahafut al-Tahafut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence) Volumes I and II* (Cambridge: E. J. W. Gibb, 1978), 331.
94 More common among the philosophers of the late medieval Latin West was the view that reason not only distinguishes us from all other animals but also likens us to the gods. Cicero's remarks in *On the Laws*, a work that was widely read in the late Middle Ages, is representative of this view: "[Human beings] alone of all types and varieties of animate creatures [have] a share in reason and thought, which all the others lack. What is there, not just in humans, but in all heaven and earth, more divine than reason?" Cicero, *On the Laws* 1.22–23; '*On the Commonwealth' and 'On the Laws*, ed. James E. G. Zetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 113.
95 *NE* 1177b27–31; *DA* 403a8–10.
96 *LC*, 295. I have opted to translate the verb (rendered by Taylor as "to understand") as "to think," in order to avoid any possible confusion between this kind of thinking and intellection ("understanding"). Taylor's translation and footnote to this passage make it very clear that what is "common to all" for Averroes is practical reason (thinking) not theoretical intellection (knowing). On the distinction between reason and intellect in Averroes, see Mohammed, *Averroes' Doctrine*, 84–114.
97 *NE* 1177b27–33.
98 *DA* 403a8–10.
99 Richard Sorabji ("Rationality," in *Rationality in Greek Thought,* ed. Michael Frede and Gisela Striker [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996]) points out that for Aquinas reason (*ratio*) and intellect *(intellectus*, *nous*) are two aspects of the same human power (334). That human beings have this power means that there is a large "chasm between humans and animals" and that "only human souls, not animal ones, can be immortal" (329). We should mention, however, that Aquinas, characterizing the "contemplative life" (i.e., the life of *theoria*) as "not properly human" (and more than that, "superhuman") does assert that the properly human life is the life of *praxis*:

> In a human, however, we find: first, a sensitive nature which is common with the brute animals; practical reason, which is proper to the human level of reality; and theoretical intellect, which is not found in a human as completely as in the angels, but according to a kind of participation. Therefore, the contemplative life is not properly human, but superhuman; while the life of pleasure, which is bound up in sensual goods, is not human but bestial. Therefore, the properly human way of life is the active life, which consists in living out the moral virtues.
>
> Aquinas, "Disputed Question on the Cardinal Virtues," 163

100 For the passage from *DA* (408b24–30) that Averroes is glossing here, I translate with "thinking, loving, hating," which exactly follows Barnes's edition of Aristotle, instead of using Taylor's "discerning, loving, hating." But both "thinking" and "discerning" are suitable synonyms for what Averroes is referring to: practical reason.
101 *LC*, 78.

102 *LC*, 78–79.
103 *LC*, 277.
104 *LC*, 428, 359.
105 *LC*, 331.
106 *LC*, 304. While it is true that cogitation according to Averroes plays a role in the epistemological process of abstraction and thus does have a theoretical aspect (for an outstanding account of this process, see di Martino, *Ratio Particularis*), the act/perfection of *theoria*—the completion or end of knowing—is superhuman, and so cogitation as perfected by humans (and as the human perfection/completion/end) resides in *praxis*. That for Averroes cogitation means practical reason is evident in his *Long Commentary on "Nicomachean Ethics"*:

> The apprehension that pertains to things whose principles are not in us [i.e., things that are not objects of *praxis*] is called speculative [i.e. theoretical] science, while the apprehension that pertains to things whose causes are in us is called practical knowledge—by which I mean that where thinking [*cogitatio*] is for the sake of activity. . . . And humans use practical cogitation [*cogitatione*] for things that are possible because of will/volition [*voluntate*; see line 20: *de cor volontate*, "volition of the heart"]. Since it is thus, the cogitative [*cogitativa*] is one of the parts of the rational soul that is receptive of reason, and the other part is the speculative [*speculativa*].
>
> Trans. mine, from the Latin text quoted in James C. Doig, *Aquinas's Philosophical Commentary on the "Ethics"* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), 11

107 1094b14–16.
108 *LC*, 414.
109 Dominik Perler ("Why Is the Sheep Afraid of the Wolf? Medieval Debates on Animal Passions," in *Emotion and Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], pp. 32–52) shows that, generally speaking, the distinction between animal passions and human emotions in late medieval Latin philosophy is based on the notion that animals "lack . . . self- determination" (48), "cannot consider alternative actions," and have "no freedom in [their] judgment" (41).
110 *LC*, 416; 415; emphasis added.
111 See Hendrik Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) for a valuable treatment of the principle that a part or power of the soul can never be in conflict with itself.
112 *LC*, 415–416; emphasis added.
113 *LC*, 428.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's 'De anima'*, trans. Alfred L. Ivry (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 126.
117 Ibid.
118 *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's 'De anima'*, 127–128.
119 *LC*, 428.
120 "The imagination [in animals other than human beings] or the [practical] intellect [in human beings] apprehends the desired object initially and, when apprehending it, desires it. When it desires it and no contrary desire

occurs to the one or the other faculty—that is, to the desiderative faculty, which is either the [practical] intellect [in rational animals] or the imagination [in nonrational animals]—the animal moves toward that desired object"; *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's 'De anima'*, 126). In human beings, the desiderative faculty is reason ("thinking, loving, and hating"), and reason is fundamentally desiderative.

121 *LC*, 414.

122 450a14–15; 449b28–29.

123 449b24–25.

124 *Epitome of 'Parva Naturalia'* 2.1, 22.

125 Aristotle, *On Memory* 453a10–13:

> Of all [the animals] that we are acquainted with, none, we venture to say, except man, shares in the faculty of recollection. The cause of this is that recollection is, as it were, a mode of inference [i.e., it is a sort of logical operation, a kind *logos*—and as such belongs only to *zoon logon echon*]. For he who endeavors to recollect infers that he formerly saw or heard, or had some such experience, and the process is, as it were, a sort of investigation. But to investigate in this way belongs naturally to those animals alone which are also endowed with the faculty of deliberation, for deliberation is a form of inference.

On the uniquely human mode of memory—recollection—as the operation of the soul that involves meanings, see di Martino, *Ratio Particularis*, 48–55.

126 Ibn Bagga, (Avempace), *La conduite de l'isolé et deux autres épîtres*, trans. Charles Genequand (Paris: J. Vrin, 2010), 128.

127 *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's 'De anima'*, 30–31.

128 On concupiscible and irascible desire in medieval philosophy, see Miner, *Thomas Aquinas*, 46–53; Lombardo, *The Logic*, 50–54; Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 222–255.

129 Quoted in Akiko Miyake, *Ezra Pound and the Mysteries of Love: A Plan for the Cantos* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 251.

130 *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio by Macrobius*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 136.

131 Inglese's excellent succinct account of *Donna me prega*'s Mars as an indicator of irascible desire (*L'intelletto*, 17–19) quotes, along with other evidence, this remark by Cavalcanti's contemporary Cecco d'Ascoli: "Mars virtutis irascitive, Venus virtutis appetive." Unfortunately Inglese, wedded to the notion that Cavalcanti views love in a negative light, ruins his own insight by claiming, with no evidence, that the essence of love for Guido is *excessively* irascible desire (41).

132 "Plato takes spirit [i.e., in Macrobius's scheme, the endowment granted by Mars] to have an affinity to reason that appetite [i.e., the endowment granted by Venus] lacks. . . . Spirit can maintain a delicately nuanced practical outlook. . . . Spirit may even come close to be disposed so as to find it admirable and praiseworthy to be the sort of person who pursues precisely those things that reason selects, and to pursue them precisely to the point that reason prescribes. It is not surprising, then, that Plato assigns spirit to reason as its natural helper and ally. . . . [Spirit] can be humanized to a very considerable extent"; Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, 2.

133 *De homine* 1.67.2; quoted in Inglese, *L'intelletto*, 18.

134 Favati (*Inchiesta*, 217), having shown that Cavalcanti's Mars signifies irascible desire, emphasizes the positive value of this specifically human mode

of desire: "[Cavalcanti] intends to speak about a human love, a love worthy of the name, not about an animalistic love: about love-passion, certainly, but not about love-animality."

135 The diagram is included as an appendix in Perez, *La Beatrice svelata*.

136 The distinction between sensitive and desiderative powers of the animal soul is rooted in Aristotle, *DA* 414a29–414b6.

137 It is instructive to compare this Averroist understanding of irascible desire with Aquinas's quite different scheme as outlined in his *Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*. Aquinas says that the sensitive (i.e., animal) soul has three powers: the nutritive (which it has in common with plants), the sensory, and the appetitive (2.5; 154). He distinguishes between three kinds of appetitive power: the highest, will, is rational and uniquely human; the other two, the concupiscible and the irascible, are sensory and irrational (3.14; 397.) Will is rational because it "apprehends the good in accordance with the *universal* nature of the good," whereas the sensory appetitive powers (concupiscible and irascible desire) apprehend determinate, particular goods (3.14; 398). The concupiscible is desire for something good and hatred of something bad; the irascible is hope for something good and fear of something bad (ibid.). Aquinas in effect subsumes the irascible within the concupiscible: the irascible power "fights for the concupiscible, so to speak," and "all the passions of the irascible power get their start from passions of the concupiscible power and have their terminus in them" (ibid.). That is, the irascible for Aquinas is a *means* for the attainment of concupiscible desire ("animals get angry and fight only for things that are pleasant—i.e., for food and sex" [ibid.]); it is a generically animal sensory power, not rational and uniquely human. At one point, however, Aquinas does admit that irascible desire "possesses some degree of reason" (3.15; 407); perhaps he is thinking of the calculation of means.

138 Ardizzone (*Guido Cavalcanti*, 83–84) thinks that Cavalcanti's locating love in the sensitive soul means that "love, given its place and identity, is determined by the principles of matter." Moreover, wrongly claiming that "the detachment of the sensitive soul from intellect that takes place in [Averroes's] philosophy" confines the individual human to "living a life wholly determined by matter," she attributes to *Donna me prega* a "theory of determinism [that] destroys ethics." The reason for this destruction of ethics, says Ardizzone, is that love

> derives from a power that is the perfection of the sensitive soul—a perfection that is not rational but sensitive and that blocks the activity of judgment . . . : love, because it is a passion, is detached from human choice. . . . By grounding love in the laws of matter, Cavalcanti opposes the animal power of love to virtue as free choice and intellectual power. In order to explain his meaning, he openly opposes love to rational virtue and says that love is not a virtue but comes from that virtue which is the animal power.

This misguided interpretation stems from a misunderstanding of the human sensitive soul as merely generically "animal" and irrational.

139 *LC*, 415.

140 Barolini's inaccurate claim ("Dante and the Lyric Past," 22) that "Guido assigns love to the faculty of soul that is *non razionale, ma che sente* ('not rational, but which feels'), that is, to the seat of the passions, the sensitive soul" ignores the fact that for Averroes *the rational faculty is part of the sensitive soul*.

141 *LC*, 118.
142 *DA* 412a27–28.
143 *LC*, 134. The "we" is Aristotle, whose text is being quoted here.
144 *LC*, 118–119.
145 Although I disagree with his insistence that Cavalcanti regards loving as pursuing the object of sense-perception (i.e., as appetite) rather than as cogitating, Nardi's account of the faculties of the sensitive soul is helpful for showing that cogitation—which for Averroes is in effect a synonym for practical rationality—belongs to the sensitive soul:

> [Cavalcanti] does not say that love takes shape in the faculty of memory nor, to be precise, in the cogitative faculty, since love is appetite and not knowledge. The 'part where memory resides' [line 15] is the sensitive soul, which is endowed with . . . four internal senses: the *sensus communis*; memory; the imaginative faculty or *phantasia*; [and] the estimative faculty, which in humans is called the cogitative. Sensitive appetite or *epithumia*—precisely that with which [Cavalcanti] associates amorous passion—pursues the sense-perceptible [object]. . . . It is true that authors of treatises, following Averroes's example, adopt the expression *vis cogitativa* (which strictly speaking is the highest of the faculties of internal sensation) to indicate the entire complex of internal senses. Still, only if we take cogitative is this broad sense can one say that the love of which [Cavalcanti] speaks resides in the *cogitativa*"
>
> Bruno Nardi, "Noterella polemica sull'averroismo di Guido Cavalcanti," in *Rassegna di filosofía* 3 (1954), 59

146 In his *Farewell Letter* Ibn Bajja, anticipating Averroes, speaks of human thought as cogitative desire, a mode of specifically ethical desire that is higher than the generically animal imaginative power and uniquely human:

> Desire may be produced by imagination and by thought. Irrational animals possess only imaginative desire, which is their highest level. Cogitative desire [= thought] is the desire for what is just [i.e., for the ethical] and belongs exclusively to humans.
>
> Ibn Bagga, (Avempace), *La conduite de l'isolé*, 101

147 Averroes, *Compendia librorum Aristotelis qui Parva Naturalia vocantur* (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1949), 49.
148 Averroes, *Epitome of 'Parva Naturalia*,' 23–24.
149 *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's 'De anima'*, 127–128; emphases added.
150 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1048a5–22, trans. Richard Hope (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952), 187–188; emphases added.
151 Averroes, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics: An Annotated Translation of the So-called 'Epitome'*, ed. and trans. Rüdiger Arnzen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 96–97; emphases added.
152 Ibid.
153 Averroes, *Middle Commentary on 'De anima'*, 129–130.
154 Corti (*Scritti*, pp. 33–34), saying in effect the opposite of what I am saying here, thinks that in Cavalcanti's view the death of the rational human life is caused by excessive loving. She argues that although the canzone asserts that "love in itself is not opposed to the natural order," at the same time it proclaims that "the true essence of love is *excessus delectationis* [excess of pleasure/enjoyment], *inordinata concupiscentia* [inordinate carnal desire] (*oltra misura di natura*)" and that line 35's "death" signifies that love as *inordinata concupiscentia* distances and alienates the lover from the ethical *buon perfetto*.

155 Aristotle, *NE* 1105a29–33:

> Whatever deeds arise in accord with the virtues are . . . done justly . . . only if he who does those deeds . . . acts by choosing and by choosing the actions in question for their own sake.
>
> Trans. Bartlett and Collins, 31

156 *NE* 1097b31–1098a4. *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 12–13.

157 Nardi (*Dante e la cultura*, 123) thinks that line 38's "not . . . opposed to the natural" means that love "arises from a natural human need and is only wrong when it '*oltra misura di natura torna'* ['passes beyond nature's limit']."

158 I disagree with Inglese (*L'intelletto*, 38), who thinks that the *buon perfetto* here means our intellecting separate substances and that Cavalcanti's canzone blames love for our failure to attain this felicitous perfection. In fact, as we have seen throughout this study, Cavalcanti is a skeptic concerning the Conjunction, which means that the perfect human good (characterized by completion and the undividedness of potency and act) can only be the good of the practical intellect.

159 "Complementum hominum non completur nisi per congregationes et congregationes per bonitatem: esse ergo boni est necessarium, et non est necessarium eos scire veritatem." Averroes, *In Metaphysicam* II comm. 14; quoted in Pietro Pomponazzi, *Trattato sull'immortalità dell'anima*, ed. Vittoria Perrone Compagni (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1999), lxxvii.

160 For lines 51 and 56, I am using the text in *DeR* rather than *R/I*.

161 As part his unconvincing effort to show that Cavalcanti is a bad and confused philosopher, Sasso (*Dante, Guido*, 48–55) launches a challenge along these lines. The confusion is all Sasso's (he dogmatically claims that accidents cannot have essences) not Cavalcanti's. Although Sasso's book contains several excellent insights, very little faith should be placed in its view that *Donna me prega* is philosophically incoherent.

162 Averroes, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 61. In his *Long Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Averroes provides a proof that accidents have essences (see Matteo Di Giovanni, "Averroes's Reading of the *Metaphysics*," in *A Companion to Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. Fabrizio Amerini and Gabrielle Galluzzo [Leiden: Brill, 2014], 87). The same point is made by Aquinas: "[Aristotle] says that it is evident that definition and essence belong primarily and unqualifiedly to substances, yet not to substances alone, since in a sense accidents also have a definition and essence, though not in the first way"; *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), para. 1339, 450.

163 *R/I* 's gloss (158) is typical of this reduction: "beyond measure of nature" is said to indicate an excessively charged erotic drive originating with an influx from the planet Mars, beyond the moderate level of natural sexual desire. Corti (*Scritti*, 34) similarly thinks that line 44 characterizes love as *inordinata concuspiscentia*; this is wrong, since love for Cavalcanti is not concupiscible but rather irascible desire.

164 1177b27–34; trans. Bartlett and Collins, 225.

165 It is interesting to note that in the Latin translation of Averroes's Middle Commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* the word *mensura* ("measure"; line 44's *misura*) is used three times, to indicate the degree or limit separating the human (natural) from the divine (supernatural), in Averroes's paraphrase of the just quoted key passage from Aristotle.

166 *DA* 403a16–19.
167 For a valuable lengthy gloss on these verses, see Savona, *Per un commento*, 71–76.
168 For "unformed" see *DeR,* 104; Casella, *Rime*, 138; Fenzi (*La canzone*, 158) provides a succinct account of the history of the question. For "formed," see *R/I*, 159; Grimaldi (Alighieri), *Nuova edizione*, 551–552; Savona, *Per un commento*, 76–80, whose substantial gloss amounts to a valuable survey of various readings. Generally speaking, whether they endorse "unformed" or "formed," commentators share the same interpretation: that the lover is obliged to fixate on the image/*intentio* rather than the intelligible universal—that is, since love is irrational, the lover is cut off from the world of pure intelligible forms, the domain of the Possible Intellect. Partisans of "unformed" contrast the *intentio* negatively in opposition to the world of intelligible forms which the *intentio* blinds the lover from seeing; in other words, they think that the *intentio* is unformed. This is wrong, since an *intentio* is nothing other than what Ibn Bajja and the Latins after him call a "spiritual form." Partisans of "formed" consider the *intentio* to be a mere form/image rather than the actual intelligible. At any rate, the idea that love's irrationality prevents the lover from intellecting cannot be correct, since in Cavalcanti's Averroist view, humans never make contact with the domain of the Possible Intellect: their connection with that domain is *always* mediated by the *intentio imaginata*—and whether one loves or not has nothing whatsoever to do with this natural fact. These commentators also unanimously read the verse as saying that the lover is obliged to look within, at an image within his soul. I am claiming that loving, in its highest mode, demands that the lover aim at and shoot for (*mirare*) the realm where entities are not composites of form and matter—i.e., the metaphysical realm.
169 This work was translated into Latin, probably by Michael Scot, in the first third of thirteenth century.
170 *Averroes' 'De substantia orbis': Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text with English Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Arthur Hyman (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1986), 79, 68–69, 74.
171 Ibid., 80.
172 *LC*, 302–303, 305.
173 Giuliano Tanturli ("Guido Cavalcanti contro Dante," in *Le tradizioni del testo: studi di letteratura italiana offerti a Domenico De Robertis*, ed. F. Gavazzeni and G. Gorni [Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1993], 8) maintains that with line 53 Cavalcanti rewrites a verse from Dante's poem *Tanto gentile* (*Vita nuova* 26), "*che 'ntender no la può chi no la prova*" ("one who does not experience it cannot understand it"). This is an intriguing suggestion, since it would mean that Cavalcanti is replacing Dante's *intendere* ("to understand") with *imaginare*, as an indication that the highest mode of human thinking is imagination, not understanding in the strict sense.
174 As Fenzi (*La canzone*, 159) remarks concerning these verses, the general import is that "Love does not permit the lover to move nor to turn away. But from what? And toward what? Every conceivable variation has been proposed [by the commentators]."
175 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1048a11–15; trans. Hope, 188; emphases added.
176 *NE* 1095b16–18.
177 *NE* 1095b20.
178 *NE* 1177b18–33; trans. (slightly modified) Bartlett and Collins, 225.

179 Averroes's Middle Commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* (a very close paraphrase of Aristotle's text) opens by characterizing ethics—and indeed human happiness—as proper comportment with respect to pleasure and pain:

> It seems in most cases that pleasure is proper to our species and that it is natural for us. And, for this reason, young people are educated to the point where they are habituated to find pleasure as they ought and to feel pain as they ought. Indeed, it seems that enjoying what one should and rejecting what one should leaves a strong ethical imprint and, when one will have applied oneself to this diligently through a whole life, one will have the power for and the solid mark of happiness in life. For humans throughout their lives choose what is pleasant and flee from what is painful.
>
> Trans. mine, from the Latin text in Woerther, *Le plaisir, le bonheur,* 138–140

180 Savona (*Per un commento*, 22), in addition to noting the traditional play on *amaro* ("bitter"), suggests reading *amare* as *amar è*: "it is bitter."
181 *Rhetoric* 1371b13–19.
182 *NE* 1156b6–22; trans. Bartlett and Collins, 168.
183 Wack, *Lovesickness*, 189.
184 Ibid., 187.
185 For *selvagge* as rustic peasant women, see *R/I*, 160; Corti, *Scritti*, 38; Inglese, *L'intelletto*, 44.
186 For *selvagge* as hostile to the lover, see *DeR*, 106; Cirigliano (Cavalcanti), *The Complete Poems,* 65; Cassata (Cavalcanti), *Rime,* 139; Gagliardi, *Guido Cavalcanti e Dante*, 53. Another group of commentators, emphasizing the somewhat neutral sense "primitive" (as one might call "primitive" a group of humans who have not yet encountered a more "advanced" or "civilized" group), takes the *selvagge* as women who are unaware of, as yet unexposed to, love. Thus we have *selvagge* glossed as "inexperienced novices" (Fenzi, *La canzone*, 83) and as women "inexperienced in the ways of love—that is, such who do not rise to the high standards of love" (Sasso, *Dante, Guido*, 80).
187 See Nelson (Cavalcanti), *The Poetry*, 41; Contini, cited in *R/I*, 160; Savona (*Per un commento*, 89) glosses line 61 as "in fact the passion of love is put to flight by fear."
188 See Cassata (Cavalcanti), *Rime*, 139; Fenzi, *La canzone*, 83.
189 Inglese (*L'intelletto*, 44):

> Beautiful 'rustic women,' on the other hand, are *not* 'arrows' suitable to strike with the force of love, for it was a commonplace that they were immediately, or nearly immediately, available for sexual adventure: *selvagge* thus means *selvatiche* ['wild'], inhabitants of the fields and the woods, precisely like the *pasturella* [shepherdess] who is the protagonist of Cavalcanti's most famous ballad.

Inglese is referring to Cavalcanti's *In un boschetto trova' pasturella* (Poem XLVI), a softcore pornographic wish-fulfillment fantasy.

190 For example: "The origin of lovesickness is a sort of *cognitio interrupta* or a cognitive process that is truncated because the phantasm or vision of the beloved lady does not, cannot, and above all must not reach the Possible Intellect"; Paolo Cherchi, "Cavalcanti e la rappresentazione," in *Alle*

origini dell'Io lirico: Cavalcanti o dell'interiorità, ed. R. Antonelli (Rome: Viella, 2001), 46. Cherchi's philosophically sophisticated interpretation of the canzone is well worth pondering. He argues (47) that the lover, if he is to sustain his particular love, must keep love from turning into an abstract universal, into an intelligible such as "the notion of being in love." This reading depends on our allowing that something such as "being in love" (which is surely an accident) has an intelligible form of the sort that resides in the Possible Intellect. My sense is that Avicenna might count such a notion as an intelligible but that Averroes very likely would not. Cherchi's reading also depends on the assumption that love is exceptional in this regard, that there is something special about love that necessitates this truncation.

191 Woerther, *Le plaisir, le bonheur*, 172.
192 Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's 'De anima'* 3.14; trans. Pasnau, 398.
193 1369b34–1370a1.
194 1370a3–5.
195 1370a8–11.
196 1370b5: "Sweet 'tis when rescued to remember pain" (Euripides); 1370b12: "Sweeter it is by far than the honeycomb dripping with sweetness" (Homer); 1371a28: "Change is in all things sweet" (Euripides). Aristotle explains that the change that is sweet is movement toward one's natural state.
197 1370a12–16; emphasis added.
198 See Trond Berg Eriksen, *Bios Theoretikos: Notes on Aristotle's* Ethica Nicomachea *X, 6–8* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1976), 44–51.
199 *NE* 1098b32–1099a5.
200 *NE* 1098A6–7.
201 *NE* 1178b19–20.
202 *NE* 1098a4–5; 1098a16–17.
203 *Generation of Animals* 735a10–12; see Eriksen, *Bios*, 46.
204 *NE* 1175a11–21.
205 *NE* 1094a18–22.
206 *NE* 1100b19–20.
207 1177a12–18; 1178a 6–8; trans. Bartlett and Collins, 223–224, 226.
208 1094a17–18. For an excellent account of Dante's *Purgatory* as an expression of philosophy as the ongoing activity of inquiry, see Paul Stern, *Dante's Philosophical Life: Politics and Human Wisdom in 'Purgatorio'* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
209 "Happiness, then, is something complete and self-sufficient, and is the end of action"; 1097b20–21.
210 1174b31–33. For an illuminating discussion of this and other aspects of pleasure in Aristotle, see Gerhard Seel, "What is Pleasure According to Aristotle?", in *Êthikê Theôria: Studi sull'*Etica Nicomachea *in onore di Carlo Natali*, ed. Francesca Masi, Stefano Maso, and Cristina Viano (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019), 239–267.
211 Woerther, *Le plaisir, le bonheur*, 172.
212 Ibid., 172–173.
213 Sasso, *Dante, Guido*, 80–81. For excellent discussion of lines 63–66, see Savona, *Per un commento*, 92–97.
214 Ciccuto (Cavalcanti), *Rime*, 122; Grimaldi (Alighieri), *Nuova edizione*, 554; *DeR*, 106; Corti, *Scritti*, 37; Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, 61; Savona, *Per un commento*, 86.
215 *R/I*, 160; Fenzi, *La canzone*, 84. See also Cassata (Cavalcanti), *Rime*, 132.
216 On this question of *compriso* and its relation to *bianco*, Corti's highly influential commentary is, as usual, a mix of accurate, fundamentally

important insights, on the one hand, and claims that completely betray Cavalcanti's intentions, on the other. Her argument here (*Scritti*, 38–39) goes as follows. First, she places a stop after *viso*, taking line 63 to mean that love cannot be known through vision. She then reads *compriso* in the light of the Anonymous Giele's *virtus comprehendens*, (mistakenly, I think) taking that to be the sensitive soul's power to apprehend, seize, absorb, or gather sensible particulars—and *only* sensible particulars. Finally, taking *bianco* to mean intelligible form and arguing that love in itself is "white" (i.e., an intelligible universal), she argues that the universal intelligible form of love "loses its luminous whiteness [i.e., its intelligibility]" when it is grasped by and gathered in to the sensitive soul:

> love, in itself white, luminous . . . *falls down* [*cade*; line 64] into the sensitive soul that has gathered it into itself [and] . . . loses its luminous whiteness [i.e., its intelligibility], depriving itself of color (*For di colore*).

The idea that Cavalcanti is talking about how the intelligible form of love in the Possible Intellect suffers a fall into the sensitive soul, a descent from pure universal intelligibility to particular materiality, is Neoplatonism with a vengeance and belongs nowhere near any kind of Aristotelian discourse. In truth, there is no intelligible form of loving in the Possible Intellect: love is not a substance and does not have an intelligible form. Love's highest calling is as an operation of the sensitive-imaginative soul. Similarly Ardizzone, who generally follows while improving on Corti's interpretation of the canzone, thinks that Cavalcanti teaches that love "lives a higher reality than that of man" and that "love . . . would be visible if men were able to participate in the phase of intellection in which the form is illuminated" (64, 62). Ardizzone is clearly maintaining that there is an intellected and intelligible form of love, and she is speaking the language of Plato, not of Aristotle. Both Corti and Ardizzone maintain that in Cavalcanti's view love is a potential object of contemplation, of theoretical intellection (even if, in Ardizzone's version, not for humans)—i.e., that love per se is an intelligible form. Sasso (*Guido, Dante*, 82), without pointing particularly toward her, provides a salient critique of Corti's reading.

217 In other words, lines 63–64 do not really treat whether love is physically visible but rather whether it is epistemologically intelligible through a process that starts with the sense-perception of a physical object. Dino del Garbo (in Fenzi, *La canzone*, 128) senses this and thus, when he reaches these lines, he rephrases his formulation of the question treated in this section of the poem. Whereas in his gloss to line 14 he had said that the question will be *utrum amor possit ostendi visibiliter an non* ("whether or not love can be displayed visibly"), now he says that Cavalcanti *vult enim ostendere utrum amor possit per visum cognosci et comprehendi* ("wants indeed to show whether love can be *known and understood* through sight").

218 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1070a9–14; Averroes, *Long Commentary on Aristotle's 'Metaphysics Book Lamda*,' Text 14 (1466); trans. Genequand, *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics*, 94; emphasis added.

219 Averroes, *Long Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics,* Comment 14 (1475); Genequand, 98.

220 Ibid., Comment 14 (1476); Genequand, 98–99.

221 Ibid., Comment 14 (1475); Genequand, 98.

222 Ibid., Comment 14 (1476); Genequand, 99.

223 Almost invariably, whiteness is Aristotle's favorite example whenever he wants to make the crucial distinction between essence (substance) and

accident. For Aristotle, white is never a being, an entity, an existent substance; rather, it is always *an accident in a substance*. For example:

> For when I say that the white thing is a log, then I say that that which is accidentally white is a log; and not that the white thing is the underlying subject for the log; for it is not the case that, being white or just what is some white, it came to be a log, so that it is not a log except accidentally. . . . The log is the underlying subject which *did* come to be white without being something other than just what is a log or a particular log. . . . There cannot be anything white which is not white through being something different. We can say goodbye to the [Platonic] forms; for they are nonny-noes.
>
> (Posterior Analytics 83a5–33)

In his *Epitome on Aristotle's 'Metaphysics'* (62–63), Averroes, making the point that accidents cannot be intellected because they do not have quiddities (i.e. intelligible forms), uses the whiteness of a white man as an example of an attribute or accident that, not itself an existent thing, cannot have an intelligible form.

224 Anonymous Giele, *Quaestiones de anima* 1.1; *Trois commentaires anonymes sur le Traité de l'âme d'Aristote*, ed. Maurice Giele, Fernand van Steenberghen, and Bernardo C. Bazàn (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1971), 24:

> Passiones non sunt aliquod ens per se subsistens, sed sunt ens in alio. . . . Si non essent hae operationes animae, nihil sciremus de ea ("Emotions are not some thing standing on its own but are a thing in another thing. . . . If it were not for these operations of the soul, we would know nothing about them").

225 See, for example: *DeR,* 106; Nelson (Cavalcanti), *The Poetry*, 41; Cassata (Cavalcanti), *Rime*, 139; Corti, *Scritti*, 39.

226 Savona, *Per un commento*, 8; Ciccuto (Cavalcanti), *Rime*, 122.

227 This is the reading preferred by Contini (*Poeti del Duecento*, cited in Grimaldi [Alighieri], *Nuova Edizione*, 555), whose views should always be taken seriously.

228 Grimaldi (Alighieri), *Nuova edizione*, 555.

229 Corti, *Scriiti*, 39, contrasting the *medium obscurum*, which (she says) does not let light pass through, with the *medium illuminatum*, which does.

230 There are two ways to understand this verse: it means either (as I have it here) that the only reward for loving is loving itself (although it is still up to the reader to decide what "loving" means) or that the (unspecified) reward comes only from loving (i.e., only through loving can one gain the reward [whatever that might be]). For a thorough discussion, see Savona, *Per un commento*, 98–101. Savona (101) paraphrases line 70 thus: "And so, reader, don't expect from love any reward, any recompense, other than the illusory and momentary gratification of the senses, the satisfaction of a sensual and irrational passion." Malato (*Dante e Guido*, 46) similarly takes line 70 to mean that "the pleasure of the senses is the only *mercede*, the only recompense that love grants to the lover." See also Sasso, *Dante, Guido*, 87; Inglese, *L'intelletto*, 45–46; Fenzi (*La canzone*, 85 [see also 53–54]) takes the verse to mean "love finds its only mode of satisfaction or recompense in its being reciprocated." Fenzi (50) considers this, in the final analysis, to be tantamount to the radically negative assertion that "love provides nothing and leads to nothing" and as a rejection of Dante's view of love as a positive force.

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