CHAPTER TEN

WHY ISN'T THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM MEDIEVAL?

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One answer: Because medieval philosophy is just the continuation of ancient philosophy by other means—the Latin language and the Catholic Church—and, as Wallace Matson pointed out some time ago, the mind-body problem isn't ancient.[1]

> A tempting reply. But it underestimates the liveliness of medieval philosophers, who cheerfully reinterpret, revise, reject, and even ridicule Aristotle's views if they don't stand up to scrutiny. Seeing a problem Aristotle didn't see was no barrier to their ingenuity. This reply also underestimates the extent to which medieval philosophy differs from ancient philosophy: the Christian philosophers of the High Middle Ages, unlike their Greek predecessors, had doctrinal commitments to the existence of separated human souls, and hence to a soul-body dualism from which it seems a short step to mind-body dualism.

That medieval philosophers never took this step is surprising, and all the more so to us, in light of our conviction that the mind-body problem is not only unavoidable but more or less *obvious*. Brief reflection on the phenomenal contents of consciousness is all it takes, at least in the minds of modern philosophers: the difference between sensations and physiological states is patent, whereas their connection is not; the possibility of their complete disconnection is but a moment's thought away. From hunger to color to pain, such brief reflection was as immediately available in the Middle Ages as it is today. David Chalmers, for example, takes the problem to be evident from simply being conscious (his emphases):[2]

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[1] Matson (1966). This essay is meant to be the sequel to Matson's.

[2] Chalmers (1996), 4. This is how Chalmers introduces the problem to which he devotes the rest of his book.

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> A mental state is conscious if it has a *qualitative feel*—an associated quality of experience. These qualitative feels are also known as phenomenal qualities, or *qualia* for short. The problem of explaining these phenomenal qualities is just the problem of consciousness. This is the really hard part of the mind-body problem.

Didn't medieval philosophers notice that their mental states had these sorts of phenomenal qualities? Didn't they get hungry, see green grass and blue sky, occasionally step on sharp stones? Weren't they conscious? Why, then, didn't they see the problem?

10.1.

One obstacle faced by medieval philosophers was also faced by their Greek predecessors, namely the lack of any ready way to ask the question at the heart of the mind-body problem: 'What is the relation of sensation to the body on the one hand and to the mind (or soul) on the other hand?' For 'body' Latin provides *corpus* and for 'mind' or 'soul' *mens*, *animus* / *anima*, *ingenium*, and in a pinch *spiritus* or *ratio*, all words available from early on. The difficulty in raising the question is posed by the term 'sensation.' What is its Latin form?

One candidate, *sensus*, means the bodily organ or faculty ('sense'), which clearly won't do; the sense-faculty is related to the soul in virtue of being a faculty of the sensitive soul, hardly a matter for philosophical puzzlement. The term *sensus* can also be used as a stand-in for a particular sensory process or activity, namely seeing, hearing, and so on ('sensing'). But then it can't easily be pressed into service to pick out only an aspect of that process, namely its purely phenomenal qualities, which is the meaning it has to have to be philosophically problematic. Thus *sensus* won't do the job.

A second, and perhaps more obvious, candidate looks to the Latin root of 'sensation,' *sensatio*. Yet this word is a surprisingly late coinage. It does not occur in antiquity: *sensatio* is unattested during all periods—preclassical, classical, silver age, even late Latin.[3] Nor is it to be found for centuries afterward. It does not appear in the philosophical writings of Augustine, Boethius, Eriugena, Anselm, Abelard, Grosseteste, or Albert the Great,[4]

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[3] It is not listed in Lewis & Short or in *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Computer searches of the *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, which includes the whole of ancient Latin literature, also turn up no instances.

[4] The claim for Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Abelard, and Grosseteste is based on computer searches of all their philosophical writings, using the best available texts and editions. The claim for Eriugena and for Albert is based on checking

philosophers who wrote extensively about the relationship between the soul and the body in painstaking, not to say nitpicking, detail. Prior to the thirteenth century there is no such word. Hence there isn't any straightforward way to raise the question. And if the question can't be asked, its putative consequences need not be faced.

Now this line of reasoning shouldn't be overrated. The issue is whether the concept is expressible in Latin, not whether Latin has a single word that is the exact equivalent of the ordinary English word.[5] But neither should it be underrated. It points up the fact that 'sensation' is not an ordinary English word. It is rather a bit of philosophical jargon, a technical term specifically introduced to talk about phenomenal content independent of its (external) cause (if any). The lack of any Latin term with this meaning suggests that literate people felt no need to speak of 'phenomenal content,' and further that classical and (early) medieval philosophers saw nothing wrong with that. Instead, discussion of sensing was bound up with bodily processes triggered by external causes. Worries centered on how such an evidently physical (indeed physiological) process could have an influence on the incorporeal human intellect, that is, how the lower could affect the higher. Up to the thirteenth century, worries about the 'phenomenal content' of sensing were simply not on the philosophical agenda at all, whether by a single expression or a more complex description.

Nevertheless, the term was eventually introduced. Was it the felt need for a term to discuss such matters that led to coining *sensatio*? Was it, like its English descendant, introduced as a technical term precisely to make philosophical inquiry more exact?

The first use of *sensatio*, as far as I have been able to determine, is in Michael Scotus's Latin translation of Averroës's greater commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, *ca.* 1220–1230.[6] Michael uses it in three passages. First, he takes *sensationes* to render Aristotle's αἰσθήσεις (*De anima* 3.3 429a3), although *sensus* would do as well in the context. Additionally,

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their texts and searching the indexes of the best available editions. Further searches in Cetedoc (CLCLT-4) turn up only two instances of the word, neither germane: one in Johannes de Fonte, in the florilegium *Auctoritates Aristotelis*; the other in Irenaeus, *Aduerses haereses* 2.13.2. A similar claim is defended in Hamesse (1996).

[5] Contemporary philosophical jargon furnishes a third candidate for naming raw feels: *qualia*, which has the advantage of being Latin already. But in this sense it is, alas, fake Latin, at best intelligible as a relative pronoun ('which things of the sort'), not as a neuter plural substantive.

[6] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*.

Michael translates Averroës as holding that imagination assimilates *sensationes* that are in the common sense (*In De anima*) 2, *ad* t.160 373.23), that *sensationes* remain after the sensible object is no longer present (*ad* t.162 377.16–18), and that *intentiones*, perceived by the imagination, are cognitively present by means of *sensations* (*In De anima* 3, *ad* t.5 391.135–140). The second passage arguably gives the root meaning of the term, namely 'what is left behind in sensing something,' which may be retained in the common sense, as in the first passage, and be the vehicle for *intentiones*, as in the last; but there is nothing in all this of 'sensation' as our modern term of art. Rather, *sensatio* picks out the aftereffect of sensing, not some intrinsic (phenomenal) feature belonging to the act of sensing. A vestige of the act is no part of it, merely its remainder. Hence *sensatio* wasn't coined with an eye to the mind-body problem. It does not license the conclusion that medieval philosophers were struggling, even inchoately, to describe phenomenal content independently of its embodiment.

For all that, the presence of *sensatio* in Michael's translation of Aristotle and in his translation of Averroes's accompanying commentary put the term into circulation, though not widely. For example, it appears only twice in the millions of words Aquinas wrote.[7] Not surprisingly, both occurrences are found in his commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, despite the fact that for his commentary Aquinas used William of Moerbeke's new revision of James of Venice's translation rather than Michael Scotus's version; he knew Averroës's commentary, and in any case before Moerbeke's translation Scotus's was the only game in town. Of these two passages in Aquinas, one holds no surprises. Aristotle had asserted that the sense-organ can take on the form of the object without its matter (425b22–23), which is why even after the objects are gone there come about in us αἰσθήσεις καὶ φαντασίαι = *sensus et imaginationes in nobis fiunt* (*erunt* Scotus); Aquinas repeats the phrase in his commentary but changes *sensus* to *sensationes* (*In De anima* 3.2.121), with exactly the same meaning as in Averroës: what is left behind in sensing something.

The second passage in which Aquinas uses *sensatio* is structurally similar to the first. As before, Aquinas paraphrases Aristotle's use of *sensus* with *sensatio*. But there is a subtle shift in its meaning here. Aristotle argues in 425a30–b1 that the common sensibles—features such as motion,

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[7] R. Busa, *Index Thomisticus: Sancti Thomae Aquinatis operum omnium indices et concordantiae*, Sectio II, Concordantia prima, Vol. 20 268 *s.v.* sensatio. It was later used five times by the unknown author who completed Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*. See also Busa (1996).

shape, number, and the like, accessible through more than one of the five senses—are not proper objects of any sense but rather are common to many senses. Any given sense, he argues, senses the proper object of another sense only accidentally; there can be only a single object in any single act of sensing: ἀλλ' ἓν μία [αἰσθήσις] = *secundum quod fit unus sensus*, which Aquinas paraphrases as *una sensatio secundum actum*, that is, a single actual *sensatio* (*In De anima* 3.1.231). Unlike the preceding passage, Aquinas no longer confines *sensatio* to the aftermath of an act of sensing. It is now also applied to what occurs during the act of sensing. Extending its meaning in this fashion seems natural because whatever gets left behind as an after-effect must already be present in the act of sensing itself. How could it be left behind unless it were there in the first place? Thus an act of sensing involves an actual *sensatio*, perhaps in addition to leaving one behind. (The act of sensing cannot be identical to the *sensatio*, since the latter persists in the absence of the sensed object whereas the former does not.) Hence an external object causes a *sensatio* in a subject when it is sensed. It's still not quite the equivalent of 'sensation'; there is no hint that it denotes purely phenomenal content, a 'raw feel' metaphysically unconnected with its physiological incarnation. If anything, it's closer to 'impression' if we retain that word's pre-Humean causal flavor, namely 'something brought about by the action of an external object.' Furthermore, as a constituent of the act of sensing, *sensatio* is much closer to 'sensation' than it was in Michael Scotus. It needs only a medieval Hume to shift its sense a bit more to reach the mind-body problem.

A look at William of Ockham, for better or worse often considered a medieval Hume, seems to confirm this suspicion and to engineer the shift. Ockham explicitly talks about *sensationes* as accidents inhering in the soul, a move that seems to justify the translation 'sensations' at last: they are apparently no longer bound up with the physiology of the sense-organs by their nature, although it may be a fact about the way the world works that we have sensations—the soul has sensations—only when our sense-organs are acted upon by external objects.

From here it seems but a short step to the mind-body problem. All we have to do is allow that such sensations are essentially non-physical. Given Ockham's dogmatic committment to the existence of separated human souls, the step is short indeed. Furthermore, the timing is more or less right. We would expect the ground for the philosophical agenda pursued by modern philosophy to be prepared in the Middle Ages, and Ockham's philosophy casts a long shadow over the intervening years.

Ockham *does* in fact anticipate the mind-body problem. His example is hardly such as to encourage the Cartesian dualist, however. While arguing

in his *Quodlibeta* 2.10 that the sensitive and the intellective souls in humans are really distinct from one another, Ockham describes a form of dualism in recognizably Cartesian terms, with sensations existing in a disembodied human soul as their subject:[8]

> Sensations are in the sensitive soul as their subject, either directly or indirectly; they are not in the intellective soul as their subject; hence the intellective and the sensitive souls are distinct. The major premiss is clear… Proof of the minor premiss: If it were not so, then any apprehension belonging to the sensitive soul would be an act of understanding, since it would be in the intellective soul as its subject. Likewise, then a separated soul would be able to sense, since, from the fact that (*a*) the sensation is in the intellective soul and (*b*) God can preserve any accident in its subject apart from anything else, it follows that He could preserve a sensation in a separated soul—and that's just ridiculous!

Ockham 'recognizes' the mind-body problem in the sense that he takes it as a *reductio ad absurdum*, in itself sufficient to establish the real distinction between the sensitive and the intellective souls. His argument is against the possibility that there be sensations in the intellective soul, but that is an extra and inessential feature of his argument; all he needs to make his point is the very absurdity of there being sensations in a separated soul—whether we call it the 'intellective' soul or just the human soul *tout court* is of no moment. Since God can preserve any accident in its subject apart from anything else, Ockham's philosophical point in (*b*) is that sensations are processes that necessarily occur in embodied souls.[9] He returns to the same line of reasoning in *Reportatio* 4 q.9, where he argues that if the sensitive and intellective souls were not really distinct, 'then bodily vision and other operations of the sensitive powers are just as immaterial and non-bodily as

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[8] "Sensationes sunt subiectiue in anima sensitiua mediate uel immediate; et non sunt subiectiue in anima intellectiua; igitur distinguuntur. Maior patet… Minor probatur, quia aliter omnis apprehensio animae sensitiuae esset intellectio, quia esset subiectiue in anima intellectiua. Similiter tunc anima separata posset sentire, quia ex quo sensatio est subiectiue in anima intellectiua et Deus potest conseruare omne accidens in suo subiecto sine quocumque alio, per consequens posset conseruare sensationem in anima separata; quod est absurdum." (William Ockham, *Opera theologica* (O.T.) IX 158.42–53.)

[9] More exactly, sensations are *actualizations* of sense-organs, and therefore are neither logically nor existentially independent of them, as Scotus's account, discussed below, makes clear. Modern philosophers treat sensations as the (external) causal product of the physiological process of sensing, and thence dismiss their causal origins as irrelevant.

are understanding and the mind's eye,'[10] a consequence he again takes to be ridiculous: sensations can't be immaterial. Instead, they are the content of an act of sensing, which is, or essentially involves, a bodily process.[11] Ockham is squarely medieval on this score. There are sensations, and human souls may persist in the absence of their bodies, but there can't be sensations in human souls in the absence of their bodies, any more than the dance can be separated from the dancer's dancing.

10.2.

Ockham's great Franciscan predecessor, John Duns Scotus, explains why the inference fails. In his *Quodlibeta* 9, while investigating whether God could bring it about that an angel inform matter, Scotus takes up Aristotle's claim that understanding is an immaterial operation. On the best interpretation (9.30), Scotus tells us, Aristotle's claim holds that the proper and proximate subject of understanding is not the complex form of the whole composite (i.e., the essence humanity) but the simple form of the part, as opposed to the body. He distinguishes acts of understanding from acts of sensing on this score (9.28–29):[12]

> Any sensitive operation is primarily composed of matter and form as its receptive subject, as the start of the *De sensu et sensato* makes clear. For the soul is not itself directly receptive of sight, but instead the organ composed of

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[10] "Item, si sic, tunc uisio corporalis set aliae operationes potentiarum sensitiuarum sunt ita immateriales et spirituales sicut intellectio et uisio intellectualis." (O.T. VII 162.12–14.) This is one of a series of arguments designed to establish the real distinction from the difference in the relevant powers.

[11] There is one other stray usage of *sensatio* found in Ockham's writings. In *Reportatio* 3 q.2 Ockham describes how something may leave traces of its scent in the air after it has departed: remanet sensatio consimilis sicut praesente et existente obiecto principali (OT VI 82.2–3). This usage seems reminiscent of Michael's use of *sensatio* as something left behind by the sensible object—here admittedly impresed on the medium rather than the memory, but Ockham makes no more of it.

[12] "Quaelibet operatio sensitiua est primo compositi ex materia et forma sicut proprii receptiui, sicut patet in principio De sensu et sensato; non enim ipsa anima est immediate receptiua uisionis, sed ipsum organum quod est compositum ex anima et determinata parte corporis, est proxima ratio recipiendi uisionem; nec est anima, nec aliquid animae, nec illa forma mixtionis quae est in determinata parte corporis, sed forma totius organi, eo modo quo humanitas est forma totius hominis, est proxima ratio recipiendi uisionem…si potentia dicatur illud quod est ratio proxima recipiendi actum, potentia uisiua non erit aliquid praecise animae, sed uel erit forma totalis ipsius organi uel aliquid consequens illam formam." (Alluntis et al., 355.)

> the soul and a determinate bodily part is the proximate ground for receiving sight: not the soul, not something belonging to the soul, not the form of the chemical elements in the determinate bodily part, but the form of the organ as a whole—just like humanity is the form of the human being as a whole—is the proximate ground for receiving sight… if the proximate ground for receiving an act be called a power, then the power of seeing won't strictly be something that belongs to the soul, but either the form of the organ as a whole or something that is consequent upon that form.

The act of sensing is not strictly physical, for non-living organic bodies do not have it; nor is it what we should call strictly mental, for disembodied souls do not have it. Instead, it is an act grounded in the animated sense-organs of a living creature, as Scotus insists. The determinate sense-organ has the power to alter its state in response to external causal stimuli; when put into a particular physical state—a 'composite' entity made up the particular physical configuration of the sense-organ and its ability to be put into that state—there is a sensing of the object.[13]

Scotus explicitly tells us in *Op. Ox*. 4 d.44 q.2 n.6 that a sensation is such a composite entity, stemming from two sources:[14]

> The power of seeing is properly something that essentially includes on the one hand a perfection belonging to the soul and on the other hand a perfection belonging to the elemental body, corresponding to the former perfection, for a common operation. In the same fashion, the sensation itself primarily belongs the whole made of these two perfections in such a way that its proximate subject and the ground for receiving it is not in the soul, or something that is precisely in the soul, nor the form of the chemical elements combined in the organ. Instead, it is the form of the composite made up of the elemental body and the soul, as a whole, and this kind of perfection is the proximate ground of receiving the sensation.

Sensations are partly physiological and partly psychological, as we might say; they are composite entities, actualizations of the power of the sense-organ to be

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[13] Jean Buridan states this point cleanly in his *Quaestiones in De anima* (third redaction) 3.15: "The species caused by the sensible object in the organ acts together with the sense-faculty to formulate the sensation. Necesse est speciem ab obiecto sensibili causatam in organo sensus coagere cum sensu ad formationem sensationis."

[14] "Sed propria potentia uisiua est quoddam essentialiter includens illam perfectionem animae et aliam perfectionem corporis mixti, correspondentem isti ad operationem communem; et eodem modo ipsa sensatio est primo totius conjuncti ex istis duobus, ita quod proximum susceptiuum, et ratio suscipiendi non est in anima, uel aliquid quod praecise est in anima, nec forma mixtionis in organo, sed forma totius compositi ex corpore mixto et anima, et talis perfectio est proxima ratio recipiendi sensationem." (John Duns Scotus, Wadding-Vivès XX 217a–b.)

put into a determinate physical configuration, the product of a cross between material properties of the organ and the living receptivity and responsiveness it has.[15]

Sensations, in a nutshell, are manifestations of the life of the living body as it goes about its business in the world, and are therefore simply inseparable from it. In particular, they can't be separated from the living body that has the sensations. Even if we recognize the importance of the soul for the existence and occurrence of sensations, they are nevertheless phenomena of the whole person, and can no more be chalked up to the immaterial soul than the dancer's dance.

Hence there cannot be a mind-body problem, as Scotus explicitly concludes in his *Quodlibeta* 9.28 (immediately after the passage cited above):[16]

> It's clear too why the soul isn't able to sense when separated from the body: (*a*) it doesn't have anything able to be the subject of sensation, which is an organ, and (*b*) it also doesn't have the formal ground for being the subject, which is the entire form of the organ in question. The case of understanding is just the opposite, since its proximate subject and proximate formal ground for being the subject is the soul or some proper part of the soul that doesn't include any matter—which is why it can be appropriate for the separated soul, that is, because its proximate subject still persists.

Unlike sense, understanding is capable of taking place in a disembodied soul, for its proper subject—that in virtue of which the understanding understands—is intrinsically nonmaterial, whereas sense depends both materially and formally on the body. That's the burden of (*a*)–(*b*). Hence

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[15] "Natural operations that consist in actings and undergoings, such as sensory operations, cannot be in [angels], since they are apt to be received only in something made up of an organ (as a complete mixture of elements) and the soul (insofar as it has the power to perfect [the organ]." (John Duns Scotus, *Op. Ox.* 2 d.8 q.unica n.4.) "Sed operationum naturalium quae consistunt in agere et pati, cuiusmodi sunt operationes sensuales, in illas non potest quia illae non sunt natae recipi nisi in composito ex organo, saltem perfecte mixto, et ex anima, inquantum habet potentiam perfectiuam." (John Duns Scotus, Wadding-Vivès XII 420A.)

[16] "Patet etiam quare anima separata non potest sentire, quia non habet receptiuum sensationis quod est organum, nec formalem rationem recipiendi quae est forma totalis ipsius organi. Per oppositum est de intellectione: quia receptiuum eius proximum et proxima ratio formalis recipiendi eam est anima uel aliquid ex parte animae praecise, non includendo aliquam materiam; et propter hoc potest ipsa competere animae separatae, quia ibi manet proximum eius receptiuum." (Alluntis et al., 356.)

sensations cannot be grouped with ideas to form the Cartesian Mind, whose relation to the body is so problematic for modern philosophy. To the extent that medieval philosophers drew any sort of line between mind and body, the line was drawn so as to put the processes of sense-perception on the bodily side, making them essential to sensation. That's why the mind-body problem isn't medieval.

10.3.

Put as plainly as that, an alternate route towards a medieval mind-body problem suggests itself. Ockham, as recounted above, argues that the absurdity of disembodied sensation is sufficient to establish the real distinction between the sensitive and the intellective souls in humans. That puts the line in the right place: the living (sensitive) body, which is a composite of sensitive soul and organic body, on the one side; the intellective soul, capable of existing without the body, on the other side. But not all medieval philosophers accepted the real distinction between the sensitive and intellective souls. Ockham did, but Scotus, for example, did not. He tells us in *Op. Ox*. 4 d.44 q.1 n.4 that 'the sensitive soul and the vegetative soul are, in humans, the same as the intellective soul.'[17] Now if the sensitive and intellective souls are not really distinct, they must really be the same, that is, they are metaphysically the same thing (*res*). Hence either the intellective soul doesn't survive the corruption of the body, or the sensitive soul can exist in a disembodied form. But the philosophers of the High Middle Ages were doctrinally committed to the belief that the intellective soul, at least, has to survive death, so the first alternative is a non-starter. Hence the sensitive soul can exist in a disembodied form. Its actions, therefore, are not essentially bound up with the body. In particular, the activity of sensing—or at least its product, sensation—is not bound up with the body. Thus it too can exist in a disembodied soul. *Voilà*! The mind-body problem in medieval guise, at least for philosophers who denied the real distinction between sensitive and intellective souls.

Thus it seems as though the mind-body problem should have been a problem for some medieval philosophers. If they failed to recognize it as the logical consequence of their views, they were the lesser philosophers for their failure.

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[17] "Sensitiua autem et uegetatiua in homine, eadem anima est cum intellectiua." (John Duns Scotus, Wadding-Vivès XX 164a.) See also *Ord*. 2 d.1 q.6 n.321 (Vat. VII 156), where Scotus asserts that all three souls are really the same although formally distinct.

So one might think. But those who denied the real distinction between the sensitive and intellective souls recognized the consequences of their views, explicitly noting the possibility of the mind-body problem and rejecting it on philosophical grounds.

The first and most notorious of all the medieval philosophers who denied the real distinction between the sensitive soul and the intellective soul was Thomas Aquinas.[18] In his *Summa theologiae* Ia q.76 art.3 Aquinas argues that there are no other souls in humans apart from the intellective soul, or, to state his conclusion more precisely, that there is but a single soul in humans: 'Thus we maintain that the nutritive soul, the sensitive soul, and the intellective soul are numerically the same in a human being.'[19] This single soul, Aquinas explains, is properly described as 'intellective' and has in its power whatever the sensitive soul in brute animals can do, and likewise whatever the nutritive soul in plants can do. Furthermore, he explicitly notes that the sensitive soul in brute animals is corruptible, whereas in humans the 'sensitive soul' in combination with the 'intellective soul'—properly speaking both are just the single human soul—is thereby rendered as incorruptible as the latter (*ad* 1). Hence the 'sensitive soul' survives death and exists in separation from the body. It looks as though Aquinas countenances the ingredients of the medieval mind-body problem.

But Aquinas doesn't let matters rest there. In *Summa theologiae* Ia q.77 art.5 he asks whether the soul is the subject of all its powers. On the face of it the answer should be yes: an exercise of the soul's powers ought to result in something the soul can do. After all, if the powers belong to the soul, they should by all rights be in the soul as their subject. Aquinas, though, argues that the answer should be no, on the grounds that the soul might possess powers that can only be exercised in conjunction with something else, not by the soul alone. The underlying principle is that a power, whatever its source, must have as its subject that to which its exercise belongs: *oportet quod eius sit potentia sicut subiecti*, *cuius est operatio*.[20] Thinking and

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[18] Other philosophers of distinction who followed Aquinas on this score in the High Middle Ages were Gilles of Lessine, Hervaeus Natalis, Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, and Jean Buridan. See Zavalloni (1951). For the views of Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus see Cross (1998), Chapter 5. For Jean Buridan, see Zupko (2003) Chapter 11.

[19] "Sic ergo dicendum quod eadem numero est anima in homine sensitiua et intellectiua et nutritiua." See also *Summa contra gentiles* 2.58, *Quaestiones de anima* art.2, and *Quodlibeta* 9.5.

[20] Aquinas takes this principle from Aristotle, *De somno* 1 454a8–11. See also Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae* 89, 92.

choosing are mental operations that don't require any bodily organ, and so they have the soul—the single human soul—as their subject. Not so for sense:[21]

> Some operations that belong to the soul are carried out through bodily organs, such as seeing (through the eye), hearing (through the ear), and likewise for all other operations of the nutritive or the sensitive part. Hence the powers that are the sources of such operations are in the compound as their subject, not in the soul alone.

The soul thinks and chooses; the compound sees and hears. The capacity to sense is rooted in the soul, but can only be realized in the embodied soul. Put another way, souls confer the power to see on bodies, yet souls need bodies to exercise the conferred power.[22] From here it is a short step to rejecting the medieval mind-body problem. Aquinas takes that step in art.8, when he asks whether all of the powers of the soul remain in the soul once it has been separated from the body.[23] His answer shows that he, like Ockham, thought it strictly impossible for there to be 'sensations' (acts of the 'sensitive soul') in the human soul after death:[24]

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[21] "Quaedam uero operationes sunt animae quae exercentur per organa corporalia, sicut uisio per oculum, et auditus per aurem, et simile est de omnibus aliis operationibus nutritiuae et sensitiuae partis. Et ideo potentiae quae sunt talium operationum principia sunt in coniuncto sicut in subiecto et non in anima sola."

[22] This sidesteps a controversy about whether sensing is somehow an intrinsically immaterial act when it involves a 'spiritual alteration' (*immutatio spiritualis*) in the subject: see Pasnau (1997), 42–47; Hoffman (1990a).

[23] See also *Sententiae* 4 d.44 q.3 art.3 and d.50 q.1 art.1, *Summa contra gentiles* 2.81, *Quaestiones de anima* q.19, *Quodlibeta* 10.4 art.2. Recognizably the same distinction is drawn in terms of proximate and remote potency by Jean Buridan when he discusses the unicity of the human soul in his *Quaestiones super decem libros Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum* 6.3 118vb.

[24] "Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut iam dictum est, omnes potentiae animae comparantur ad animam solam sicut ad principium. Sed quaedam potentiae comparantur ad animam solam sicut ad subiectum, ut intellectus et uoluntas, et huiusmodi potentiae necesse est quod maneant in anima, corpore destructo. Quaedam uero potentiae sunt in conuincto sicut in subiecto: sicut omnes potentiae sensitiuae partis et nutritiuae. Destructo autem subiecto, non potest accidens remanere. Unde, corrupto coniuncto, non manent huiusmodi potentiae actu; sed uirtute tantum manent in anima, sicut in principio uel radice. Et sic falsum est quod quidam dicunt huiusmodi potentias in anima remanere etiam corpore corrupto. Et multo falsius quod dicunt etiam actus harum potentiarum remanere in anima separata, quia talium potentiarum nulla est actio nisi per organum corporeum."

> We maintain that, as noted before, all powers of the soul are related to the soul alone as their source. Now some powers are related to the soul alone as their subject, for instance intellect and will; powers of this sort must remain in the soul once the body is destroyed. Other powers, however, are in the compound as their subject, for instance all the powers of the sensitive and the nutritive part. Now an accident cannot remain if its subject is destroyed. Accordingly, once the compound is corrupted, powers of this type don't remain in the soul actually, but instead only virtually; the soul is their source or root. Thus what some philosophers say, namely that powers of this sort remain in the soul even after the body has been corrupted, is false. And to say that acts belonging to these powers remain in the separated soul is even more false, since such powers have action only through a bodily organ.

A moment's reflection shows that Aquinas's distinction between the source of an ability and the subject of the ability is well-founded. Dancing is a physical activity that involves a certain kind of knowhow, namely knowing how to dance in general and how to dance this given dance in particular. A dancer who loses her legs still has the relevant knowhow but can't put it into practice. Were her legs to be regenerated by the medical technology of the future, she would be able to dance again. The person as a whole dances, though her ability to dance is rooted in the knowledge she has. So too with the ability to sense: it is rooted in the soul and flows from it, but in itself is an action not of the soul alone but of the embodied soul.

The argument for a medieval mind-body problem thus founders in the move from 'sensory powers belong to a soul that can exist apart from the body' to 'sensory powers can be actualized in a soul that exists apart from a body.' Medieval philosophers who hold the unitary nature of the human soul can admit the former while denying the inference to the latter.[25] Hence this line of reasoning doesn't provide an alternate route to a medieval mind-body problem. If anything, it underscores the recognition that such a problem would be a *reductio ad absurdum* for any reasonable aristotelian philosophy of mind.

10.4.

Medieval philosophy was not only—perhaps not even primarily—an *aristotelian* affair. Even in the High Middle Ages the influence of Plato was felt everywhere. Surprisingly, this might lend aid and comfort to partisans

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[25] Versions of Aquinas's move are found in other philosophers who endorse the unitary human soul. Duns Scotus, for example, uses nearly the same terminology as Aquinas, asserting that the single human soul 'contains' each of the formally distinct souls virtually (*uirtualiter*).

of the mind-body problem. For Plato was understood to have held not only a strong version of soul-body dualism, in which the human soul and the human body are distinct substances, but also that sensing belongs to the soul rather than to the body. So Aquinas in *Summa theologiae* 1a q.75 art.3:[26]

> Ancient philosophers didn't draw any distinction between sense and intellect, and attributed both up to a bodily principle. Plato, however, did draw a distinction between intellect and sense, but he attributed each one to a nonbodily principle, maintaining that sensing, like thinking, holds of the soul in its own right.

Whatever the justice of attributing this view to Plato,[27] it seems to pose the mind-body problem in an unambiguous and unavoidable manner. For if the activity of sensing does belong 'to a nonbodily principle,' then it seems plausible to think that sensing is fundamentally a nonbodily activity, and so we can properly ask how such nonbodily sensory events—call them sensations—are related to the body. And that's all we need for the mind-body problem. Perhaps, then, we have been looking in the wrong place; the medieval platonic tradition, rather than the medieval aristotelian tradition, is where the mind-body problem is to be found.

To point out that medieval philosophers thought that Plato held a certain view is not to say that any medieval philosopher held the view in question. Nor are we concerned here with whether Plato actually held the view. But it is worth noting that Aquinas, who did think Plato held the view, also thought the view to have been decisively refuted by Aristotle. He reasons as follows. If soul and body are distinct substances, they must be related as

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[26] 'Respondeo dicendum quod antiqui philosophi nullam distinctionem ponebant inter sensum et intellectum, et utrumque corporeo principio attribuebant, ut dictum est. Plato autem distinxit inter intellectum et sensum; utrumque tamen attribuit principio incorporeo, ponens quod, sicut intelligere, ita et sentire convenit animae secundum seipsam.'

[27] The ultimate source of the view seems to be *Theaetetus* 184C, where Plato says that we sense through bodily organs rather than with them; this is repeated in the Pseudo-Platonic *First Alcibiades* 129D–130C and elevated into the principle that we are 'really' our souls and merely use the body. The view passed into the Middle Ages by several conduits, notably in Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei* 19.3 (though not attributed to Plato there), and in Nemesius of Emessa, *De natura hominis* 3 (51.32–52.35), a work mistakenly attributed to Gregory of Nyssa and therefore having as much authority as Augustine, if not more. The *De spiritu et anima* 15, wrongly ascribed to Augustine, asserted that when the soul leaves the body 'it takes with it sense and imagination' (see Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Ia q.77 art.8).

mover and moved.[28] But then they cannot form a unity, since features we normally attribute to the whole person would be attributed only *per accidens* on Plato's view, to one or the other of the two substances; this is the core of four separate arguments he puts forward (*Summa theologiae* Ia q.76 art.1). In these arguments Aquinas deliberately focusses on the relation between the intellect and the body, rather than on disembodied sensation, but the upshot is the same: Plato's view has been superseded by a philosophically improved view that doesn't permit certain undesireable consequences.

It should not come as any surprise that Aquinas would find Plato's position inadequate. The question is whether any medieval philosopher held the same view, or one sufficiently similar, to permit the possibility of disembodied sensation, and hence a medieval mind-body problem. Well, why not start at the top? The arch-platonist of the Middle Ages was surely Augustine. Aquinas even goes so far as to say that Augustine had been 'soaked through and through with the teachings of the Platonists' (*doctrinis platonicorum imbutus fuerat*: *Summa theologiae* Ia q.84 art.5). If any medieval philosopher is likely to have adopted Plato's view, it is Augustine. Did he?

It certainly seems so. For instance, in *De ciuitate Dei* 21.3 Augustine tells us that pain is felt in the soul and is not merely a bodily phenomenon:[29]

> The soul itself, which by its presence rules and governs the body, can feel pain and yet not pass away… If we consider the matter more carefully, pain, which is said to belong to the body, is more pertinent to the soul. For feeling pain is a feature of the soul, not the body, even when the reason for its pain exists in the body.

Likewise Augustine seems to adopt Plato's 'instrumentalist' account of the soul-body relation: a human being 'is a rational soul using a mortal and earthly body' (*De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.27.52); the soul 'is a certain substance that shares in reason and made fit to rule the body' (*De quantitate animae* 13.22). It appears there is a medieval mind-body problem after all.

Appearances, however, can be misleading. To say that pain is not merely a bodily phenomenon is not to say that it is a nonbodily phenomenon; it may be more pertinent to the soul, but the body is not thereby made irrelevant. Moreover, the soul's 'use' of the body may not have Cartesian

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[28] Aquinas takes this point from Aristotle, *De anima* 1.3 406b25–28; see Plato, *Timaeus* 34C–37C. See further the discussion in Bazan (1997).

[29] "Ipse quippe animus, cuius praesentia corpus uiuit et regitur, et dolorem pati potest et mori non potest… Si autem consideremus diligentius, dolor, qui dicitur corporis, magis ad animam pertinet. Animae est enim dolere, non corporis, etiam quando ei dolendi causa existit a corpore."

connotations—it depends how the metaphor is cashed out. Augustine elsewhere informs us that the body is not a mere ornament or an assistant brought in from outside, but is integral to human nature (*De cura pro mortuis gerenda* 3.5). Indeed, Augustine rejects Plato's strong version of soul-body dualism, insisting that soul and body are combined to produce a single unified entity, the rational substance that is a human being: *substantia rationalis constans ex anima et corpore* (*De Trinitate* 15.7.11),[30] eventually settling on the word 'person' for the combination. Unfortunately, Augustine is not as clear as he might be on the nature of the combination. At various times he calls it a 'mixture' (*mixtio*, *commixtio*, *permixtio*, *mixtura*); a blending (*contemperatio*, literally for a mixed drink!); an incomplete fusion (*unio inconfusa*); and the like, often calling it 'indescribable' (*ineffabili*).[31]

While sympathizing with his struggle to describe a kind of unity that nevertheless allows each element of the compound some measure of identity, we have to admit that Augustine's attempts to pin down the relation between soul and body in general aren't sufficiently precise to allow us to draw any conclusions about whether there can be disembodied sensation.

Fortunately, Augustine is extremely detailed and precise when it comes to particular instances of soul-body interaction, and never more so than in the case of sense. In *De quantitate animae* 23.41, Augustine proposes that sensing is for the soul not to overlook what takes place in the body, (*non latere animam quod patitur corpus*) (cfr. 25.48). For Augustine the soul is active in sensing: he adopts the Platonic extromission theory of vision, for example, and its correlates for the other senses. In part this is to account for the fact that external objects may affect our sense-organs without our taking notice of them; he is, roughly, worried about 'unapperceived perceptions.' Thus the eye is a 'window' through which the mind may look out at the world (*Ennarationes in Psalmos* 41.7), or the various sense-organs 'the body's doors' (*De Genesin ad litteram* 7.18.24). Literally, the faculty of vision sees, not the eyes themselves (*De quantitate animae* 23.43). But Augustine insists that the faculty of vision can only see through the eyes by attending to the eyes. He offers a purely physiological explanation: the soul acts through the various senses by moving the air (*spiritus* = πνεῦμα) that travels through the nerves from the sense-organs to the anterior cerebral ventricle.[32] He therefore can distinguish between bodily events of which we

[30] See also *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.4.6, *Epistolae* 3.4, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 2.7.9. The issue is discussed in Rist (1994), 97–104.

[31] See O'Daly (1987), 42–44.

[32] See O'Daly (1987), 82–84 for references and details.

remain unaware, and cases of sensing something. In the latter, Augustine explains, sensing occurs because the soul sets up a 'contrary motion' to that engendered in the nerves by the pure physiological changes an external object causes in the sense-organ, so that 'sensing is moving the body counter to the motion that is engendered in it,' *sentire mouere sit corpus aduersus illum motum qui in eo factus est* (*De musica* 6.5.15), as though the external object 'pushed' the body and the soul were pushing back.[33]

Sensing, on this account, is literally a bodily event. It is the countermovement of the body against the physiological stimulus. That countermotion is a soul-aware event, since it is engendered and maintained by the soul, but it is physical as much as mental. Augustine's formulation leaves it nicely open: sensing is moving the body, where the emphasis could fall on the body's movement (physical) or on the moving agent (mental). Or on both equally. It's hard to believe that Augustine, ever the rhetorician and fine-tuned to verbal nuance, would have overlooked the subtlety.

Augustine's theory of sense-perception explains the remarks above that seemed to validate a medieval mind-body problem. As he says, a reason for pain may exist in the body, but in the absence of the soul's countermotion there is no pain, that is, no pain is felt. Hence the soul is more pertinent to the experience of pain; mere bodily changes do not suffice, as the modern experience of anaesthesia (and the ancient example of extreme drunkenness) should testify. But the body is equally necessary; the essence of sensing is bodily—and therefore cannot exist apart from the body. There is no room for disembodied sensation, and hence none for a mind-body problem, even in the Platonist tradition, even in the early Middle Ages.

10.5. CONCLUSION

Why, then, did a mind-body problem ever arise? What made it ever seem like a problem worth accepting, rather than a *reductio* of one's philosophical views? What benefits did Descartes think outweighed its intolerable difficulties?[34] How in the world did he get anyone to agree with him?

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[33] The causal language here is to fill in the lacuna left by Augustine's general account of the soul-body relation. The soul can set up the countermotion since it is commingled, or mixed, or incompletely fused, or whatever, with the body. This need not be a case of mover and moved, as noted above. Whatever obscurities remain, they don't affect his point that sensing is a process that requires a body.

[34] Supposing that Descartes was a Cartesian dualist in the traditional sense. This is not entirely uncontroversial: see Rozemond (1998), especially Chapter 6; Baker and Morris (1996).

The answer, I think, *cannot* come from medieval philosophy of psychology. As far as the Middle Ages were concerned, the mind-body problem was a non-starter, the dust having settled since Plato's flirtation with it in Antiquity. Medieval anticipations of practically everything else can be found, but not the mind-body problem. The answer must lie elsewhere.

Let me suggest by way of conclusion that the culprit might be the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. The success of the New Science made it seem plausible that the only 'real' properties in the world were fundamentally quantitative: the primary qualities of size, shape, location, speed, direction. But that left secondary qualities with nowhere to go, so to speak. They had to migrate from the external world (where they had happily been since Antiquity) to the only place left that still seemed inexplicable in quantitative terms, namely the mind. The standard examples of 'phenomenal qualities' ever since Descartes have paradigmatically been perceptual properties—the color of the sky, the smell of wet leather, the sound of a tree falling in the forest—and, of course, the perennial staple, pain. But during the Middle Ages colors, sounds, and smells were are all thought to be unproblematically qualitative features of the external world, no more having a special and inexplicable 'phenomenal' dimension than, say, the shape of the chair. Colors certainly could be the contents of mental acts in the Middle Ages, but they were contents in exactly the same way as the shape of the chair, and posed the same difficulties, none of which involved their supposed 'feel.' But once the world was denuded of secondary qualities, their unreal existence in the mind set the stage for the mind-body problem.

Contemporary philosophy is now more sophisticated about the real existence of perceptual properties such as color. We no longer need to banish them; we can make room for them as response-dependent concepts, as supervenient qualities, no more to be eliminated in favor of chunks of matter in motion than are the latter in favor of quarks or superstrings. Contemporary conceptions of color are not quite the same as medieval conceptions, to be sure, but they do not force the mind-body problem on us.

But what about the perennial staple, pain? Surely, it will be objected, pain was never an objective feature of the world, even in the Middle Ages. Whatever medieval philosophers said about pain can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to sensations of heat, to sensations of cold, and, well, to *sensations*. Pain is the pure test case for the mind-body problem. What could be more purely mental than pain, or at least the painfulness of pain? When we are harmed, don't we want to put an end to the sensations of pain?

Classical and medieval philosophy takes pain to be produced by damaged or overloaded sense-organs. It is a sign that a given sense-organ is being prevented from functioning properly. It is no more intrinsically mental than

color or shape. The sense-organ fails to act normally and produce its proper sensible for some reason or other, and pain is the result. It is exactly as mysterious as anything else we sense, no more and no less. It will provide a ground for the mind-body problem only to the extent that color or shape do. And, as Wallace Matson pointed out, it does no good to exclaim that we want to put an end to the sensations of pain. Instead, we want to put an end to the pain; *satis superque*.