

AUGUSTINE AND HUMAN EMBODIMENT

In an illuminating article, "The Anthropology of Augustine", *Louvain Studies*, 5: 1 (1974) 34-47, Tarsicius van Bavel designated the body-soul relationship as one of five fundamental components for correctly understanding the thought of Saint Augustine. Acutely conscious of the limitations imposed by so vast a topic, Father van Bavel lamented the fact that his account of the conjunction of body and soul as found in Augustine's voluminous writings was necessarily incomplete.

This essay responds to Father van Bavel's urging both a wider selection of texts from the bishop's writings and a distillation of doctrinal aspects of Augustine's thought as these shed light upon the body-soul relationship.

In what follows I deliberately choose not to enter two contested areas of scholarship. The first is the territory recently mapped out by the tenacious investigations of Robert O'Connell ascribing the conception of the human being as "fallen soul" to the Bishop of Hippo late in his pastoral ministry. A second inhospitable terrain is furnished by the complexities arising from the shift in Augustine's thinking from human solidarity and seminal identity with Adam and Eve to the seminal transmission of original sin. Helpful research on both these issues will be indicated in the select bibliography at the end of this essay.

TERMINOLOGY FOR BODY AND SOUL

In an early work Augustine tells us that the human body, *corpus*, comes from God who is the author of all harmony (VR 11, 21). Augustine's view of reality is permeated with ideas of harmony, order and proportion (LA 2, 16, 41-3). This is no less true of his sensitive appreciation of the human body.

Augustine often distinguishes between *corpus*, body and *caro*, flesh. The body belongs to human nature. "Flesh" frequently occurs as synonymous with "body", particularly in the Pauline sense depicting a weakened, corrupt, fallen human nature. In a striking sequence

Augustine differentiates between "body" and "flesh", portraying the flesh as a prison (P 141, 18), clear echoes of the Platonic axiom, *sōma - sēma*. In a manner which becomes a trademark of his literary style and biblical exegesis the bishop conflates the scriptural texts, Eph 5: 29 "No one ever hates his own flesh", with Wis 9: 15 "the corruptible body burdens the soul" by insisting: "They do not hate their own body, but rather its corruption and its weight" (DC 1, 24, 24).

Physical integrity of the body pertains to the inherent destiny and supreme good of every human being (E 118, 3, 13). Meanwhile, the body is "beautiful in its own right for it is held together by form and species" (VR 20, 40). Number constitutes the unifying principle of the stars, geometry and music, the entire material universe. Similarly, the human body is held together by mathematical proportion which is supremely beautiful in its physical attributes.

When an individual deliberately chooses to neglect God, "even in this instance", says Augustine, "a bodily creature does not become evil in itself", *ne sic quidem malum fit ipsa [corporea creatura]* (VR 20, 40). One is encouraged, in fact, to love the body so as to be able to care for it wisely and reasonably (DC 1, 25, 26). In one of many reflections upon Mt 22: 37-40 Augustine tells us:

But if you consider yourself in your entirety, your soul and body, and your neighbour in his entirety, his soul and body (for a human being is composed of soul and body), no class of objects to be loved has been omitted in these two commandments (DC 1, 26, 27; Tr.J.J. Gavigan).

We ought not only to love the body: "our faith, instructed by God, praises the [human] body" *Deo docente fides nostra laudat corpus* (S 241, 7).

Augustine's vocabulary for the human soul is more flexible. In a varied manner he employs *anima*, soul, which seems to comprise everything in a human being that is not physical or corporeal. *Animus* refers to the highest level of human intelligence and is often synonymous with *mens*, the human mind, which is the seat of reason and rational intelligence. Augustine also uses *spiritus* or spirit interchangeably with both *mens* and *animus*. These three words: *animus*, *mens* and *spiritus* overlap in their meaning by specifying the locus of human intelligence and reason over and beyond the more generic term for soul, *anima*, which fundamentally signifies the principle or source of life (Hölscher 1986/228-9, n. 53).

The nature of the soul is far different from the nature of the body (Jn 20, 10; E 137, 2, 4). In an early work Augustine describes the soul as a rational substance adapted to rule a body (QA 13, 22). In a wide variety of contexts Augustine delineates the power of the soul to focus its energy and to direct a bodily sense (or multiple senses) towards external objects (Cf 10, 6, 8-9; P 42, 7-9 and T 11, 2, 2). In another context reminiscent of Plotinus (*Enneads* 4, 3, 13) Augustine establishes "a kind of natural propensity", *naturalis quidem appetitus*, on the part of "human intelligence", *mens hominis*, for managing the body (GL 12, 35, 68). On the most basic level of human existence it is the soul which animates the body (DQ 7; GL 7, 8, 11).

THE BODY-SOUL RELATIONSHIP

"Utterly amazing and beyond our powers of comprehension"! (CD 21, 10). This is how the bishop of Hippo near the end of his life marvelled at the conjunction between body and soul. A human being consists of soul and body; the composite of these two elements includes the mind and reason (DQ 7). Nothing expresses so well the "nature", *natura*, and "substance", *substantia*, of a human being than this composite structure of soul and body (S 150, 4, 5). While the human body is "altogether different in nature", *quidem natura diversum*, from the soul, it is by no means to be thought of as "foreign", *alienum*, to the soul (Ct 12, 26). Nor is the body to be considered extraneous in any way or supplementary to human nature (CD 1, 13); here Augustine furnishes the singularly apposite illustrations of jewelry, more precisely, a ring, or the clothes that one wears (CMG 3, 5). Augustine notes laconically: "A human being is a rational substance consisting of soul and body" (T 15, 7, 11), and he insists that "anyone who wishes to alienate the body from human nature is stupid, *desipit*" (AO 4, 2, 3).

Throughout his life Augustine regarded the connection between body and soul to be at times burdensome, problematic, a puzzle, indeed, a mystery. He explains this conjunction of soul and body in a variety of ways: they are coherent elements, *cohaerere*, which make a human being entire and complete (CD 10, 29). Spirits are not merely associated side by side with animated bodies; they actually stick to each other, *adhaerere*, as if they were glued together (CD 21, 10).

This connection between body and soul is further expressed by the texture of a cloth that is woven from different fibers (CD 22, 4). As a

consequence of the soul's mingling, *anima ... commixta sit vivificando corpori*, the body comes to life in response to an incorporeal command (GL 8, 21, 42). Here the possible fusion of body and soul is clearly excluded by the context and as elsewhere Augustine uses the word, "influence", *intentio*, to nuance the connection between soul and body (E 166, 2, 4).

The "strong binding-force", *tanta vis*, of body and soul is depicted as a "lovely partnership", *dulce consortium* (E 140, 6, 16). And finally, it is "as though some sort of marriage", *quasi quoddam conjugium*, existed between them (UI 4, 5).

While the soul is responsible for bodily animation and sensation, it further facilitates both the appreciation of art and the practice of virtue in its restless pursuit of tranquillity and contemplation (QA 35, 75). To the end of his days Augustine remains baffled by the manner of their inter-connectedness: "The body and the soul are one human being, although the body and the soul are not one..." (E 238, 2, 12).

A BRIEF EXCURSUS ON HUMAN ORIGINS

No less than five times at various intervals in his life Augustine examined the first three chapters of the book of Genesis. With the aid of Stoic physics he developed a theory of "seminal reasons" to elucidate the biblical account of human origins. The expressions "causal reasons" and "primordial reasons" are used interchangeably with "seminal reasons".

Augustine is careful to distinguish between the creation of Adam and Eve and, subsequently, their descendants. In the first instance the bishop of Hippo allows that the bodies of Adam and Eve may have developed gradually in time after the creation of the world. That is to say, their "seminal reasons" were developmental (dare we run the risk of anachronism by saying "evolutionary"?) principles, or seeds which were embedded by God in the original matter of the created universe. From all eternity God had included in their "seminal" or "primordial" reasons the eventuality that Adam be made from the dust of the earth and Eve from Adam's rib.

Accordingly, there were two stages or moments of creation: the first is suggested by the creation of man and woman on the sixth "day" (Gen 1: 27-31). Augustine interprets the term "day" in the biblical narrative not as a temporal sequence, but as an event in a causal series.

Adam's body taken from the dust of the earth (Gen 2: 7) and Eve, in turn, from Adam's rib (Gen 2: 21-22) constitute the second stage of creation, and is thus connected in a causal chain of being with the first stage. It is utterly childish, however, to think of God as forming a human being from the dust of the earth with bodily hands. Here the biblical language is metaphorical. Anyone in his right mind knows this (GL 6, 12, 20). God has no hands, no teeth, no physical features. But God is, in some mysterious way, responsible for the existence of the body. Divine concurrence is inherent in Augustine's theory of "seminal reasons", developmental principles which take root in the original matter of the universe.

Too often Augustine is unfairly faulted for denying to women the image of God in their own right. But such is not the case. Women, says the bishop, not only have intelligence, but he underscores this fact by insisting in straightforward language that "woman ... also was made to the image of God" (GL 3, 22, 34). Augustine disagrees with Origen's division of the human mind into a split-level apartment where the upper level represents Adam or the contemplative function and the lower level represents Eve or the practical function (T 12, 7, 9-12).

Success in Augustine's efforts to explain the origin of the human soul remains elusive. For example, what is the exegete to make of the Genesis account which portrays God as having breathed a soul into Adam's body? To suggest that the soul was created by God at the moment of its union with Adam's body would contravene the Ecclesiasticus pronouncement that "God created all things together, *simul*" (Sirach 18: 1). If this latter account is to be believed, how then could one explain the isolated existence of the soul prior to its insufflation into Adam's body? Here too the bishop's theory of "seminal reasons" is unsatisfactory. While Augustine acknowledges the possible evolution of matter, he repudiates any likely evolution of an immaterial substance such as the human soul.

Either souls are created separately in individuals as they are born (creationism), or only one soul was originally created *ex nihilo*, and the souls of all people born since derive their origin from it (traducianism). Augustine never quite made up his mind on the issue with regard to Adam and Eve, or their descendants. He inclined towards traducianism because such a theory would help explain the transmission of original sin. In the long run, he refused to decide one way or the other. While reviewing his books *De anima et ejus origine* a few years before his death, the bishop bluntly noted, no doubt this time with more than a

tinge of frustration, the impasse in his theories on the inception of individual souls among Adam's progeny: "I frankly do not know", *me nescire confessus sum* (R 2, 56 [83]).

TENDENCY TO ACCENTUATE THE SOUL OVER THE BODY

Augustine leaves little doubt that the soul has or ought to have the upper hand. Too often the combined weight of matter and the body exercises a downward pull, once the soul begins to neglect higher things. This downward pull tends to make the soul forget its "true" destiny. For both Augustine and Plato the structure of the universe constituted a vast continuum of graded entities in the chain of being. Matter and the world of the senses constantly intrude themselves upon the soul's activities. Matter was regarded as the passive receptacle of forms. In this descending chain of being (God + soul + body), matter could never be endowed with any positive quality; it lacked potentialities for further development. This Neoplatonic version of reality was far more congenial to Augustine than its Manichaean variant which utterly deplored the existence of matter as inherently evil. In his most sophisticated and thoroughgoing metaphysical attack upon the Manichees, Augustine bluntly remarks: "For not even that matter referred to by the ancients as *hyle* should be called an evil" (NB 18).

In addition to other polemical treatises against his former co-religionists, Augustine had defended the Genesis account of creation in three distinct exegetical works. The *Confessions* (13, 28, 43) likewise reach the same conclusion:

Seven times I found it in writing:
 You saw that what you made was good.
 And here is the eighth time:
 You saw all things that you made,
 and really everything taken together was not only good,
 but very good.
 Separately they were simply good,
 but all existing things together
 were both good and very good.
 (Tr.J.K. Ryan)

Platonic teaching on emanation had long since yielded to the biblical account of creation *ex nihilo*. The doctrines were incompatible with each other.

By the same token, however, Augustine's view of reality never parts company completely with the vertical structure of higher and lower goods, more important and less important values, different levels of beauty alongside a concomitant hierarchy of truths — all of which he inherited and modified appreciably from the Platonic insistence upon participation in degrees or grades of being. There remains throughout Augustine's eventful life a propensity to heighten or to overestimate the importance of the soul at the possible expense of the body.

In one of his earliest writings, for example, he describes a human being as a rational soul which makes use of a body (MEC 1, 27, 52). He says this, notwithstanding the fact that his *Retractations* 1, 1-4 criticize his unduly harsh estimate of the senses and the body in his first extant books, the four Cassiciacum Dialogues. He will persist in the *Confessions* (10, 17, 26), for example, by defining himself exclusively in terms of the mind: *et hoc [animus] ego ipse sum*. Yet earlier in the same book he had already articulated the organic unity of the human person by saying (10, 7, 11): "I, who am but one single mind, perform these different tasks through the senses". Another jarring note is sounded in the same book of the *Confessions* (10, 15, 21) when the author says: *aliud enim animus, aliud corpus* in order to safeguard the cardinal doctrine of the Platonists which argues that the inferior level of reality can not impinge upon the superior. Still we find in the same Book Ten (6, 8-7, 11) one of the most memorable evocations of an individual's response to God *per corporalia ad incorporalia* in all of world literature. In the sunset of his life Augustine refers to the mind as "the chief ornament of this mortal life" (CD 22, 24).

The bishop of Hippo appears then to possess a double mindset. On the one hand, his writings often comment upon the ascent of the soul to God, anticipating by nearly a thousand years Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*. On the other hand, Augustine wishes never to lose sight of God's descent to a human soul and body in the incarnation. Within a year before his ordination to the priesthood he had written: "So that no one should suppose that the creator of sex despised sex, he became a man born of a woman" (VR 16, 30).

When Augustine describes asceticism as a sort of vertical liftoff of the soul from the body, he frequently employs the images and vocabulary of Neoplatonism. It is precisely for this reason that many suggestions of the resolute Robert O'Connell, in his sensitive reading of Augustine, are helpful. But the bishop of Hippo also describes asceticism in a linear and horizontal movement where the biblical

categories of time and salvation-history either replace many Neoplatonic resonances altogether, or are sometimes set alongside them. It is a commonplace for Augustine, as for other Fathers of the Church, to delineate the movement of the soul in terms of a pilgrimage and also a battleground for spiritual growth and maturity.

While Neoplatonic imagery embellishes much of Augustine's thinking about the soul, the incarnate Christ stands alongside such imagery both as Mediator and Savior by revealing the core of the bishop's deepest convictions. In times past insufficient attention has been given to Augustine's grasp of such Christian doctrines as creation, incarnation and resurrection with a view to their contributions towards a more comprehensive understanding of the human body. Here, unfortunately, Augustine's influence upon the history of Christian thought has been construed as largely negative.

To be sure, deficiencies in Augustine's anthropology reflect that hiatus or those interstices in Platonic theory which fail to bridge the gap between the intelligible and sensible orders of reality, the realms of the invisible and the visible. His reading of the *Categories* at twenty years of age could hardly have been expected to equip Augustine with Aristotle's positive evaluation of matter. Augustine was further handicapped in his inability to conceptualize Aristotle's description of the active and passive intellect. Yet it is the thesis of this paper that Augustine did articulate the organic unity of the human person. And notwithstanding their inherent limitations, Neoplatonic epistemology and psychology enriched immeasurably the maturation of Augustine's penetrating explorations into the human psyche with his celebrated triad: memory, understanding and will.

Highlighting the over-spiritualizing tendency of much of Augustine's writing tends, however, to isolate but one conspicuous feature of the bishop's thought. It is as though we were to hail Augustine in an antiseptic fashion as the Doctor of Interiority or Inwardness, or to classify him as a voluntarist rather than an intellectualist. Such an assertion is deplorably oversimplified by telling only part of the story. To assert glibly that Augustine stresses the will, in contrast to Aquinas with his concomitant emphasis upon reason or the intellect, is frankly too facile. It is wholly unfair to single out one extreme to the exclusion of the other. Augustine is neither an intellectualist nor a voluntarist; by felicitously melding both faculties of the soul, knowing and willing, Augustine is more accurately designated a personalist.

In like manner, to isolate the bishop's sustained insistence on the

interior life and to link him with a Platonic other-worldliness, ignores the historical fact that he served the Church as an intensely active minister of religion for thirty-nine years, more than half his life.

Are the bishop's reflections on soul and body, therefore, as antiquated and lopsided as much secondary literature portrays them to be? Here too we must remain circumspect when evaluating the evidence. In this matter of the body-soul relationship as in so much else, for example, faith/reason, action/contemplation, time/eternity, Adam/Christ, Augustine seldom vacillates. Rather he oscillates by coming down on both sides of the binomial at the same time, or at different times depending upon the particular context (Lawless 1982/39-40).

This prominent feature of his thinking is mirrored in Augustine's style of composition which is again conditioned by the sharp contrasts of ideas and the hardened antinomies of dialectical reasoning which are indigenous to the deliberations of ancient Graeco-Roman thought. He delighted in brilliant flashes of rhetoric with their startling antithetical arrangements (CD 11, 18). Their preponderance as a stylistic constituent of his writings has exercised a somewhat malign influence upon unwary 20th-century readers, by generating the impression that Augustine's reasoning is partial, biased and one-sided.

Two illustrations of this phenomenon must suffice: the bishop of Hippo is widely reputed by his critics to come down exclusively on the side of grace, for example, at the cost of totally denigrating free choice of the will. Such a facile opinion, however, fails to consider all the evidence. We offer a single citation from among many where Augustine comes down on both sides of the freedom/grace binomial: *neque enim voluntatis arbitrium ideo tollitur quia juvatur; sed ideo juvatur quia non tollitur* (E 157, 2, 10). Long ago in her excellent book, *Augustine Philosopher of Freedom* (Paris, 1958), Mary Clark ably demonstrated that the bishop vigorously tried to harmonize his later reflections on both grace and predestination with his earlier defence of free will (Armstrong 1967/29). I am presently not convinced that the essential outlines of her arguments have been either overturned or superseded.

Secondly, the bishop of Hippo is faulted by many otherwise would-be admirers who insist that he lays too much stress upon the necessity for redemption with too little regard for the status of the original creation. In this latter issue one can hardly fault Augustine for his reluctance to part company with Saint Paul and so many Fathers of the Church who were far more keen on examining the questions of the

incarnation, mediation and divinity of Jesus Christ. Issues of salvation and redemption by Christ elicited far more attention and commentary than creation by God. The widespread practice of infant baptism, for example, in both East and West likewise favored heavy concentration by ecclesiastical writers upon the doctrine of redemption.

Apart from his polemical stance against his former co-religionists, the Manichees, it might be argued that these issues of salvation/redemption prompted Augustine no less than five times to expend considerable energy on an examination of the first three chapters of Genesis. Exclusive of sermons and letters, here is a listing of his principal writings in this area:

De Genesi adversus Manichaeos, libri duo, c. 390

De Genesi ad litteram, liber unus imperfectus, c. 393/4; (a few additions were made probably about 426/7)

Confessiones, libri XII-XIII, c. 397-400

De Genesi ad Litteram, libri duodecim, c. 401-15

De civitate Dei, libri XI-XIV, c. 418

Saint Paul's antithesis, Adam/Christ, in 1 Cor 15: 22 had long since set the stage for theologians from Irenaeus to Augustine to explore the nexus between salvation/redemption and creation so as to safeguard an intelligible interpretation and understanding of the Christian story.

Finally, it is wearisome to note the number of critics who have assailed Augustine both in his own day and in ours for his purported failure to conquer his Manichaean past with its attendant hostility towards the world of matter. Yet a seasoned scholar whose research is co-extensive with the world of late antiquity currently declares himself to be "uncertain" on the "extremely delicate issue of 'survivals' of Manichaean modes of thought in Augustine" (Brown 1988/415, n. 109).

THE GOODNESS OF THE BODY

Continence, for Augustine, relates to the mind and especially to the will as well as to the body. One can never accuse the bishop of Hippo of a narrow biologism. In a treatise entitled *Continence* (8, 20) Augustine states succinctly:

According to each part,
both soul and body,
man was made by a good God.

Man himself made the evil
by which he became evil.

Particularly in his sermons and letters the bishop specifies drunkenness, over-eating, brutality and violence as malignant symptoms of physical pleasure (*corporis voluptas*), while always careful not to attribute evil to the body itself, *non quia malum est natura corporis* (VR 45, 83). Nature in its entirety is good; evil is the result of personal choice (*Ibid.*, 23, 44). Evil is portrayed as the will to make evil use of a good thing. The operative word is "will" (NB 13; also GL 7, 26, 37). On an ontological level Augustine argues: "As long as things exist they are good. Therefore, whatever exists is good" (Cf 7, 12, 18). Twice we are reminded: "the flesh in itself is good" (CD 14, 2 and 5).

It is a "mistake to think that the ills of the soul derive from the body" (CD 14, 3). Rather "it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful; it was the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible" (*Ibid.*). It was not the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but rather the interplay of power, pride and disobedience, in this order (I repeat: power - pride - disobedience), which attracted the human will. *Voluntas ipsa*, says Augustine, as he presses allegory to its limit, was that tree (CD 14, 11).

In an earlier treatise on freedom of the will Augustine described the will of a human being as a *defectivus motus* (LA 2, 20, 54). This motion of the "will", *voluntas*, is characterized in Augustine's mature years as a "defect", *defectus*, owing to its gradual turning away from God in a downward movement which eventually terminates in "evil", *vitium*.

It is not a matter of efficiency, but of deficiency; the evil will itself is not effective but defective. For to defect from him who is the Supreme Existence to something of less reality, this is to begin to have an evil will. To try to discover the causes of such a defection — deficient, not efficient causes — is like trying to "see" darkness or to "hear" silence (CD 12, 7; Tr.H. Bettenson).

In a lengthy discussion of the psychological dimensions of the human soul, apart from the will, Augustine has much to say that need not detain us (CD 14, 5-10). Briefly, his analysis of the passions, *perturbationes*, severely faults the Manichees for maintaining that the body alone is the source of all physical pain and discomfort. He likewise counters the Stoics with their condemnation of the concupiscible and irascible appetites by insisting that one should responsibly

regulate rather than extirpate human emotions. Tears over the death of Lazarus, sorrow at the approach of his passion, angry grief at the Jews' hardness of heart, eager desire to break bread with his apostles, all characterized the Lord himself "for human emotion was not illusory in him who had a truly human body and a truly human mind" (CD 14, 9).

Epicurean "tranquillity", *ataraxia*, becomes as elusive in this life, for Augustine, as are all extreme forms of Stoic *apatheia*. Thus, the historic fact of the incarnation nullifies, for Augustine, the Platonic cycle of the soul's purification and its subsequent defilement by its burdensome connection with the body. As a subsidiary issue here we point out that the fall of the angels in the biblical story should forever lay to rest any idea that sin and evil necessarily pertain to the body. Finally, the bishop's resolute rejection of the possibility of achieving *apatheia* in this life surely absolves him from any accusation of angelism in his perspectives on the human body (CD 14, 9).

THE BEAUTY OF THE BODY

When he was twenty-seven years of age Augustine wrote *De pulchro et apto*, a book on aesthetics which was lost during his lifetime. His sensitive appreciation for beauty will prompt the bishop some thirty-five years later to lament the seemingly trivial loss of an eyebrow (CD 11, 22). Shave it off, he remarks, and the human face becomes sadly marred, disfigured with its glaring lack of symmetry and proportion. The beauty of an eyebrow, so minuscule a component of the whole body, far excels any usefulness it might serve.

Next to the brain, the lungs are the most delicate of bodily organs and, for this reason, they are protected by the rib cage. Augustine compares the compliance of the lungs whether breathing, speaking, shouting or singing to the obedient bellows of a blacksmith or an organist. The human voice approximates near perfectly the sound of birds and the cries of animals. Augustine notes further that animals are known to dislodge an arrow or a spear to prevent the weapon from seriously wounding their bodies.

Some people can wiggle their ears; others can bring their scalp forward without wiggling their ears. Augustine observed firsthand a man who could sweat on the spot; other people could spontaneously produce a flood of tears. Many brothers from Augustine's monastery tell of a priest at Calama who was capable of effecting a self-induced

trance. Restitutus frequently obliged his local fans with a command performance. Augustine records these stories and many more (CD 14, 24). Elsewhere he actually claims to be able to speak "at great length" on the praises of the earthworm (VR 41, 77). The bishop of Hippo reveals both an awareness and a knowledge of natural phenomena and a respect for scientific data that is "unusual" among the Fathers of the Church (O'Meara 1980/23).

By arousing astonishment everywhere in the universe God becomes, for Augustine, the Supreme Artist with the exercise of his almighty power (CD 22, 14). In the manner of a potter both designing and decorating pottery (a commonplace Old Testament simile for Yahweh), or the artist sculpting a statue (*Ibid.*, 22, 19), God invites his creatures to behold "that unique wonder, that miracle of miracles, the world itself" (*Ibid.*, 21, 9). The same invitation is extended in the language of everyday speech in *Sermon Mai* 126, 6:

Some people read books in order to discover God.

But there is a great book:

the very appearance of created things.

Look above you!

Look below you!

Note it; read it.

God, whom you want to discover,

never wrote that book with ink.

Instead, he set before your eyes

the things that he had made.

Can you ask for a louder voice than that?

Why, heaven and earth shout to you:

"God made me"!

"Examine closely", Augustine urges, "the beauty of the body endowed with form" (LA 2, 16, 42). Once again we can do no better than to engage your attention at some length with the bishop's remarkable description in the *City of God* (22, 24):

Moreover, even in the body ... even here what evidence we find of the goodness of God, of the providence of the mighty Creator! Are not the sense organs and the other parts of that body so arranged, and the form and shape and size of the whole body so designed as to show that it was made for the service of the rational soul? For example ... the marvellous nimbleness which has been given to the tongue and the hands, fitting them to speak, and write, and execute so many duties, and practice so many arts. Does this not prove that a body of this kind was designed as an adjunct to the soul?

(O)ne is at a loss to decide whether, in creating the body, greater

regard was given to utility or to beauty ... As for the parts which are hidden from view, like the complex system of veins, sinews and internal organs, the secrets of the vital parts, their proportions are beyond discovery...

There are some details in the body which are there simply for reasons of beauty, and for no practical purpose — for example, the nipples on a man's chest, and the beard on his face, the latter being clearly a masculine ornament, not for protection. This is shown by the fact that women's faces are hairless, and since women are physically weaker, it surely would be more appropriate for them to be given such a protection. That there is not one visible part of the body in which beauty is sacrificed to utility is scarcely a matter of debate. I think we can safely infer that in the creation of the human body dignity was a more important consideration than utility. Practical needs are, of course, transitory; and a time will come when we shall enjoy one another's beauty for itself alone, without any lust. (Trs.H. Bettenson, 1073-4; L. Hölscher, 30-1).

Augustine's song of praise has been compared to the anatomical drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, and is thought to have conceivably furnished the inspiration for Hamlet's soliloquy: "What a piece of work is man!" (Eibl 1923/308; Versfeld 1958/129). In all of Patristic literature, I dare say, no Father of the Church has written so admiringly of the human body.

Sickness too as it affected the body was an evil, for Augustine, no less than death. The maintenance of good health was precarious in the best of circumstances and its collapse was far more serious than the loss of an eyebrow. Like Basil of Caesarea, Augustine was fond of medical terminology. One of his most preferred images of salvation was that of Christ the humble physician. Augustine's personal health was often problematic with recurrent bouts of insomnia. A cursory reading of his *Sermons* and *Letters* reveals the incredible extent to which his healing ministry as a pastor had sensitized him to the physical and mental sufferings of others.

Augustine had been an eye-witness to the healing of Innocentius. A team of surgeons had barred Innocentius' personal physician from observing an operation for hemorrhoids which had been only partially successful. In a fit of distemper Innocentius dismissed his family physician. Another physician, an old man named Ammonius, was consulted and he assured the patient that non-surgical procedures would eventually prove to be effective. The surgeons, meanwhile, argued the contrary by insisting that a second operation was necessary. Innocentius likewise dismissed them. He requested a renowned surgeon

from Alexandria to come to Carthage to perform the surgery. Once again medical examination of the fistulas assured Innocentius that surgery was imperative, but to the sick man's dismay, the visiting surgeon refused to oblige him. Such had been the exceptional quality of the first hemorrhoid operation that the physician from Alexandria insisted upon the patient reinstating the first team of surgeons and permitting them to complete the cure. After interminable delays the surgery was scheduled for the second time. The surgeon from Alexandria would stand by as an observer. A presbyter, several deacons, the bishop of Uzalis and Augustine himself prayed over Innocentius the night before the scheduled surgery.

The dreaded day dawned; the visitors from the night before returned as they had promised, and again they prayed. When the surgeon attempted to remove the fistulas, tactile inspection immediately revealed that the wounds had mended and the tissue had been restored to health.

Augustine and his dear friend Alypius had been houseguests of Innocentius at the time. It was the autumn of 388 and they were returning to North Africa after some five years in Italy. Aurelius, the future bishop of Carthage, then a deacon, was also there as a representative of the local clergy who had prayed over the intractable Innocentius. Many years later Augustine's detailed eye-witness account furnishes one of the more informed samples of surgical practice in the world of late antiquity (CD 22, 8).

Such was his concern for the body that the bishop of Hippo provides details of some twenty miracles of healing: cancer of the breast, blindness, gout, gallstone, hernia, paralysis and many other illnesses. Local churches at Calama and Fussala furnished the facts in some cases, in addition to popular sanctuaries in the vicinity of Hippo as well as the church at Hippo itself. The majority of these healing miracles were credited to the intercession of martyrs whose cult was extremely popular in North Africa.

Occasionally an immediate witness to these events, Augustine at other times cites the reports of local people. His efforts to publicize such miraculous recovery of health both in pamphlet form and in public announcements read aloud in the basilica at Hippo are evidenced in many instances (CD 22, 8). Although his purpose here is clearly apologetic, Augustine's talents as a writer enable him to convey to his readers many emotional resonances lurking in the situations which he describes. One can detect in these episodes the same sensitivity

for sick people which is discernible in the middle sections of the bishop's monastic Rule (P III, 3 and 5; V 5, 6 and 8).

It has become a commonplace to credit Platonists, and Augustine in particular, with being largely negative towards the world of matter and the body. This is simply not true. Plotinus and Augustine both strenuously opposed Gnostic and Manichaean dualism to such a pitch that the bishop of Hippo has been described as a "sensualist" (Osborn 1981/153). While the number of texts on this score is legion, Eric Osborn cites the *Confessions* (2, 5, 10):

The eye is attracted to beautiful objects, by gold and silver and all such things. There is great pleasure too, in feeling something agreeable to the touch, and physical things have different qualities to please each of the other senses... The life we live on earth has its own attractions as well, because it has a certain beauty of its own in harmony with the beauty of lesser things.

THE DESTINY OF BODY AND SOUL

Augustine's first book, *De beata vita*, as its title indicates is concerned with the pursuit of happiness. No human being, insists Augustine, knowingly and willingly desires to be unhappy. When Anicia Faltonia Proba, a wealthy widow who had been blessed with a lovely family, asked what she ought to pray for, Augustine answers: "pray for a life of happiness", *ora beatam vitam* (E 130, 4, 9).

There is a strong undercurrent of eudaemonism in Augustine's ethics. While brimming with irony, the bishop suggests some 288 possible descriptions of happiness as a résumé of the richest intellectual legacy of ancient Graeco-Roman thought (CD 19, 1).

Marcus Varro (117-26 B.C.) had concluded that human happiness consisted in "virtue and the other goods of soul and body without which virtue cannot exist" (CD 19, 3). Happiness, furthermore, is social by nature (*Ibid.*). A human being is more at home with his dog than with another human being who speaks a foreign language (CD 19, 7). Human sociability combines elements of constructive "leisure" with elements of "action" (CD 19, 3 and 19). For both the truly "wise man", *vir sapiens* of late antiquity and the "holy man", *vir sanctus*, neither body nor soul was to be depreciated to the detriment of one or the other. And yet, each possible description of human happiness hinted at by Augustine and attributed by him to a theoretical total of 288

philosophical sects was deficient precisely because each sect failed to include the one true God and Jesus Christ whom God had sent.

Varro had made a start in this direction and Porphyry (233-c. 301 A.D.) a few centuries later. Neither of them, however, could identify the goal of human happiness; nor could they provide a clear vision of the way to reach that goal. God alone, says Augustine, is the source of all goodness. Consequently, only God who made human beings, makes human beings happy (E 155, 1, 2).

Porphyry, "the most renowned of the pagan philosophers" (CD 22, 3) was wide of the mark on at least two notable counts: 1) by repudiating the need for divine assistance, specifically, the role of Jesus Christ as sole mediator between God and human beings, and 2) by vigorously rejecting the resurrection of the body as both a monstrous and ridiculous belief. Authentic happiness, says Augustine, if it is at least to match the immortality of the human soul, must be unending or eternal without fear of loss and, secondly, it must embrace *both* body and soul. Porphyry had never abandoned his fundamental conviction, "one must completely escape the body", *omne corpus fugiendum est*. If only Porphyry could have accepted Plato's position, as Augustine understood it, that the soul can not remain permanently in a bodiless state (CD 22, 27), or the estimate of Cornelius Labeo (late 3rd century A.D.) and Varro, who maintained that the human soul returned to the same body as before (CD 22, 28). The coalition of these pagan perspectives could have approximated the Christian doctrine of resurrection of the flesh. Humility alone was lacking, says Augustine, the sole remedy for pride: "God is already humble, and human beings are still proud" (S 142, 6).

While he regarded theurgy as a means of moral purification, Porphyry acknowledged its limitations as a degenerate form of Platonism. Theurgy includes all those activities whereby one persuades divinities to do or not to do something according to one's desires. Porphyry further recognized that the contemplative character of Greek thought with its emphasis upon intellectual and moral asceticism was tailored to fit only the leisured classes. Accordingly, contemplation was frankly too elitist for the masses of people. In a similar vein Plotinus himself attacked the Gnostics for their secret knowledge and techniques aimed to provide a direct approach to God.

From an apologetic perspective Augustine conjectured that the entrenched teaching of Greek thought on the immortality of the soul had anticipated Christian belief in the resurrection of the body (CD 22,

26-8). By contrast, the Christian doctrine of the incarnation was *a priori* unthinkable, for it was axiomatic to claim: "there is no way at all for God to mingle with human beings", *fieri non potest ut deus misceatur cum hominibus*. In the long run, of course, the Neoplatonic rejection of mediation precluded acceptance of both Christian doctrines, incarnation and resurrection. Porphyry's search for a universal way of purification had foundered precisely because of his total denial of the possibility of divine mediation.

In our present context we can only allude to the theme of resurrection as a sequel to death which Augustine describes as "a harsh and unnatural experience" (CD 13, 6). A corpse is a mere body without any feeling or sensation; the tenement lies on the ground, its tenant is gone (Jn 43, 12). The soul is the tenant; the flesh is the tenement (S 368, 1).

We have come full circle as we return to the words: *corpus, caro, anima* and its variants, words which can be distinguished from each other in many ways, but dimensions of human experience which can be separated from each other only for a fixed period of time after death. During this interval which serves as a prelude to resurrection prayers for the deceased individual are useful; the celebration of the eucharist is likewise meaningful; invocation of the martyrs possibly stimulates the desire for further prayer; respect for the deceased person reinforces belief in the resurrection. These are some of Augustine's reflections to Paulinus of Nola c. 421 A.D. in his treatise *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*.

There is no doubt, meanwhile, in Augustine's mind that the resurrected body of an individual will be essentially the same body that died and was buried. Yet that body will be changed so that it is then both physical and spiritual, much like the body of Jesus as he walked the earth after his resurrection and before his ascension to the right hand of the Father. Augustine's thoughts bear all the evidence of the continuity and transformation featured by Saint Paul in 1 Cor 15: 42 ff.

One finds in Augustine of Hippo a rather robust understanding of the human body. In fact, he goes so far as to say that "there was no other reason for the coming of Christ" than the resurrection of the body (Jn 23, 6).

"Take away death, the last enemy", he tells his congregation, "and my own flesh will be my dear friend throughout eternity" (S 155, 15).

Augustine's assessment of the human body has so far failed to receive the attention it deserves.

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1. Abbreviations

AO	<i>De anima et ejus origine</i>
CD	<i>De civitate Dei</i>
Cf	<i>Confessiones</i>
Ct	<i>De continentia</i>
CMG	<i>De cura pro mortuis gerenda</i>
DC	<i>De doctrina christiana</i>
DQ	<i>De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus</i>
E	<i>Epistula(e)</i>
En	<i>Enchiridion ad Laurentium sive de fide, spe et charitate</i>
GL	<i>De Genesi ad litteram</i>
Jn	<i>Tractatus evangelii ad Johannem</i>
LA	<i>De libero arbitrio</i>
MEC	<i>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae</i>
NB	<i>De natura boni</i>
P	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>
Pr	<i>Praeceptum</i> (Verheijen)
QA	<i>De quantitate animae</i>
R	<i>Retractationes</i> (Bardy)
S	<i>Sermo(nes)</i>
T	<i>De trinitate</i>
UI	<i>De utilitate jejunii</i>
VR	<i>De vera religione</i>

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