

Lecture 6

Medieval Theological Anthropology: Dualism and the Body-Soul Relation

God and the World: The Cosmos in Religious and Ethical Perspective HPHP5904/6904

Dr Beatrice Bandeniece

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

b.bandeniece@uwtsd.ac.uk

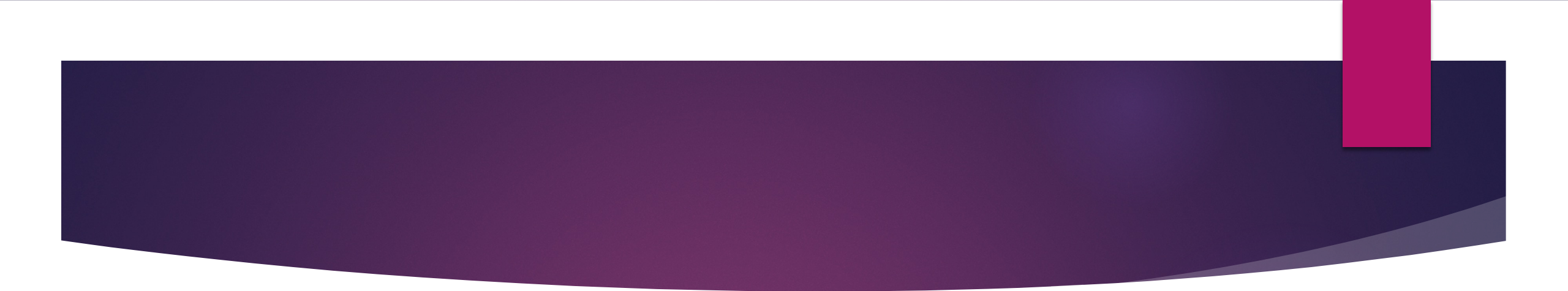
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Introduction

Theological anthropology -- the doctrine of man

Roots of medieval theological anthropology – Platonism,
Neoplatonism, patristic theology



Ancient Greek philosophy

- The soul = the true self; the principle of life
- The image (*eikon*) – by virtue of intellectual nature, the human being is a certain image of the divine.
- Stresses the intellectual character of humans

Hebraic anthropology

- Humans – unified beings moving towards God and active in history; “moving toward and becoming himself by responding to situations in which he hears the call of God”
(Bernard McGinn)

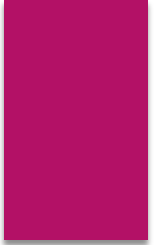
Early Christian/patristic theology

- Inclination to focus on the soul
- Flesh-spirit opposition
- The divine image -- usually seen as situated in the soul

Medieval theological anthropology

- Natural scientific works; spiritualistic works (monastic writers)
- Psychology (nature and powers of the soul); physiology
- Cathedral school of Chartres; abbey school of St Victor (Paris) – Hugh and Richard of St Victor; monastic writers (Cistercians – William of St Thierry, Isaac of Stella)
- Sources and influences: Augustine; Greek patristic writings (Origen, Gregory of Nyssa); translated Arabic medical works (Salerno, medieval Italian medical school; Constantine the African, d. 1087)
- Basis for the theology of the divine image and for discussions about man's return to God (or spiritual ascent)





The soul

The soul

Medieval treatises/works –

- William of St Thierry (c. 1085-1148), *The Nature of the Body and the Soul*;
- Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167), *Dialogue on the Soul*;
- *The Spirit and the Soul* (anonymous compiler), c. 1169-1179;
- Isaac of Stella (c. 1100-1170s), *On the Nature of the Soul*
- William of Auvergne (d. 1249), bishop of Paris, *On the Soul*

- ▶ The origin of the soul – theories
 - ▶ Pre-existence theory
 - ▶ Creationism
 - ▶ Traducianism/”spiritual traducianism”
- ▶ When is the soul joined to the body?
- ▶ Location of the soul
- ▶ Soul’s powers and functions
- ▶ The unity of the soul
- ▶ Medieval debate: the soul -- a principle of self-movement (Platonic view), or form of the body (Aristotle)
- ▶ Incomprehensibility and analogy with God

The body

The body in medieval thought

- ▶ The body can represent aspects of the cosmos: the Augustinian order of the cosmos, mystic Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179); directions within the cosmos as in the marginal drawing of *De Caelo et Mundo*, a Oxford Aristotle manuscript). (Michael Camille)
- ▶ Sense perception
 - ▶ “Doors of the flesh” - Augustine, *Confessions* 10:14 (22)
 - ▶ Tripartite vision (corporeal, spiritual, intellectual)
 - ▶ Active and passive perception (vision); extramission theory of vision (rays emitted from the eyes)- Augustine engages with this idea
 - ▶ The mind classifies sense perceptions from different sense organs to form knowledge. - Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, Ch. 10

The body-soul relation: theories and approaches

I. Body-soul relation: Dualism

- ▶ Negative dualism – partly inspired by Platonism/Neoplatonism (see Plato's *Phaedo*)
 - ▶ Spiritual entrapment by the body: “[The soul is] captive in exile, imprisoned in a body, stuck in the mud, [...] confined by your members, riddled with cares [.]” (Anonymous 12th-century treatise *On the Spirit and the Soul*, I:62)
 - ▶ The body as a tool, garment, or prison (Hugh of St Victor; Robert of Melun, 12th c.); though imprisoned, the soul still enjoys certain delights (Helinand of Froidmont, Cistercian poet, c. 1160- c. 1233)
- ▶ Holistic dualism/psychosomatic unity
- ▶ Nuanced perspectives: complex formulations of the body-soul relation; disagreements among 12th-century theologians

II. Body-soul relation: Manner of union

(C. H. Talbot)

- ▶ Augustine: a natural love exists between the body and the soul.
- ▶ Theories of body-soul union:
 - ▶ 1) Union by harmony – the soul loves the body's harmony and uses it as a vehicle for its functions.
 - ▶ 2) Union by a certain medium uniting the body and soul (physical medium or a certain power) – for example, Isaac of Stella: the body and soul are linked by the highest point of the body (the imagination of corporeal things) and the lowest point of the soul (the imagination of spiritual things).
 - ▶ 3) The soul bestows unity on the body so that both can share personhood.

III. Metaphors of union

- ▶ Negative: the body burdening the soul; the prison of the body
- ▶ Positive: an alliance; domesticity, friendship, brotherhood (Peter of Celle; Peter Lombard)



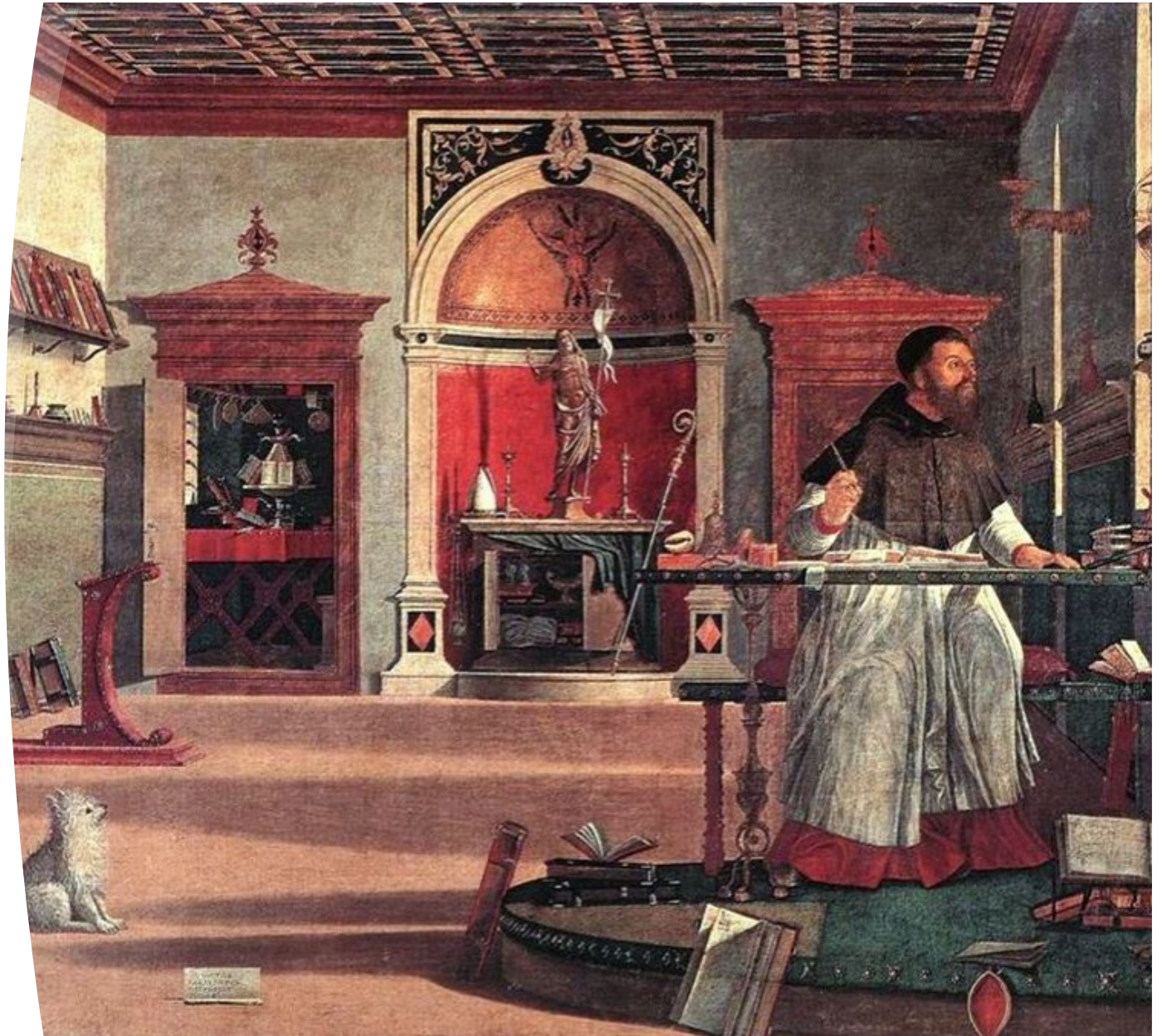
IV. Body-soul relation: Personhood

(Richard Heinzmann)

- ▶ What is the “true person”? -- Main answers:
- ▶ A) **The soul = the person.** Platonic view. The body-soul relation merely external. The body does not contribute to personhood. (Hugh of St Victor)
- ▶ B) The body **and** soul = the person essentially. The soul's being lies in animating the body; the soul has an essential relation to the body. (Gilbert of Poitiers)
- ▶ C) Middle position –
 - ▶ 1) the person=soul, **but** the human being= body and soul (Peter Lombard);
 - ▶ 2) person=body and soul, but the soul still has personhood *after* separation from the body (Abelard)

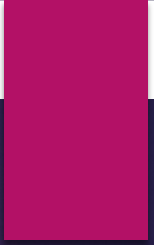
The body-soul union: significance

- THE RESURRECTION
- HUMAN-DIVINE ANALOGY AND PARTICIPATION
- ASCENT TO GOD



The body-soul relation: the Resurrection

- ▶ Augustine on the possibility of the “body of earth” living in heaven (against Platonic arguments)
 - ▶ The argument of divine power
 - ▶ The “soul is above all” the elements.
 - ▶ “[If] now earthly bodies [a “mass of matter”] can retain the souls below [on earth], shall not the souls one day be able to raise the earthly bodies above?” Augustine, *City of God*, 22:11
- ▶ Augustine: the Resurrection (bodily and spiritual) involves the restoration of the body (restoration of what was lost during life or after death), the transformation “from the oldness of the animal body into the newness of the *spiritual body*,” and being “clothed in incorruption and immortality.” – Augustine, *City of God*, 22:21

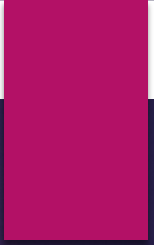


“

The flesh then shall be spiritual, and subject to the spirit, but still flesh, not spirit, as the spirit itself, when subject to the flesh, was fleshly, but still spirit and not flesh. [...] But what this spiritual body shall be and how great its grace, I fear it were but rash to pronounce, seeing that we have as yet no experience of it.

”

AUGUSTINE, *CITY OF GOD*, 22:21, TRANS. MARCUS DODS



“

"I hope that you will perfect in me your mercies to the point of that fulness of peace which will belong to my outer and my inner self, when death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. 15:54) – [*referring to bodily and spiritual resurrection*]

”

AUGUSTINE, *CONFESSIONS* 10:30 (42), p. 143, TRANS. CAROLYN J.-B. HAMMOND

The Resurrection, -- medieval example

- ▶ Hugh of St Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, II:17.13. (follows Augustine's *City of God*)
 - ▶ The resurrection imitated in nature -- daily revolutions of light, change of seasons
 - ▶ What nature shall man be? - “subtle or ephemeral, or in that body in which I remain”?
 - ▶ “But if I shall rise in an ephemeral body, then I shall not be the one that rises. For how is it true resurrection if the flesh cannot be true?” - Hugh of St Victor, *On the Sacraments*, II:17.13.

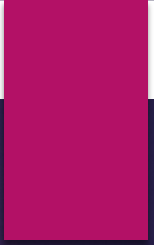
“ [Just] as, if a statue of some malleable metal were either melted in fire or pounded into dust or fused into a mass [,] and the artificer should wish to restore it again from the quantity of that measure, it would make no difference regarding its whole what particles of the material were restored to each member of the statue, provided, [...] when restored, it took back all from which it had been built, so God the Artificer in [marvellous] and ineffable fashion will restore with [...] quickness from the whole out of which our flesh had been constituted. [...] ”

Now if in the bodies of those rising again there will be a reasonable inequality, [...] this will be done for each from the material of his own body [.] [...] [Whatever] will be there, will be fitting, since it will not be there, if it will be unfitting.

HUGH OF ST VICTOR, ON THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, II:17.15, P. 459-460, TRANS. ROY DEFERRARI

The significance of body-soul union: analogy and participation

- ▶ Analogy: The body-soul union/conjunction is sometimes suggested to prefigure the unity between God and the spirit. (Peter Lombard)
- ▶ Participation:
 - ▶ Humans were created body and soul to share “in that good which [God] Himself was, and by which He Himself was happy.” (Hugh of St Victor, *On the Sacraments*, I:6.1)



“[If God was able to] join such different natures as a body and soul in one union and friendship, by no means would it be impossible for Him to elevate the lowness of the rational creature, although far inferior, to participation in His glory.”

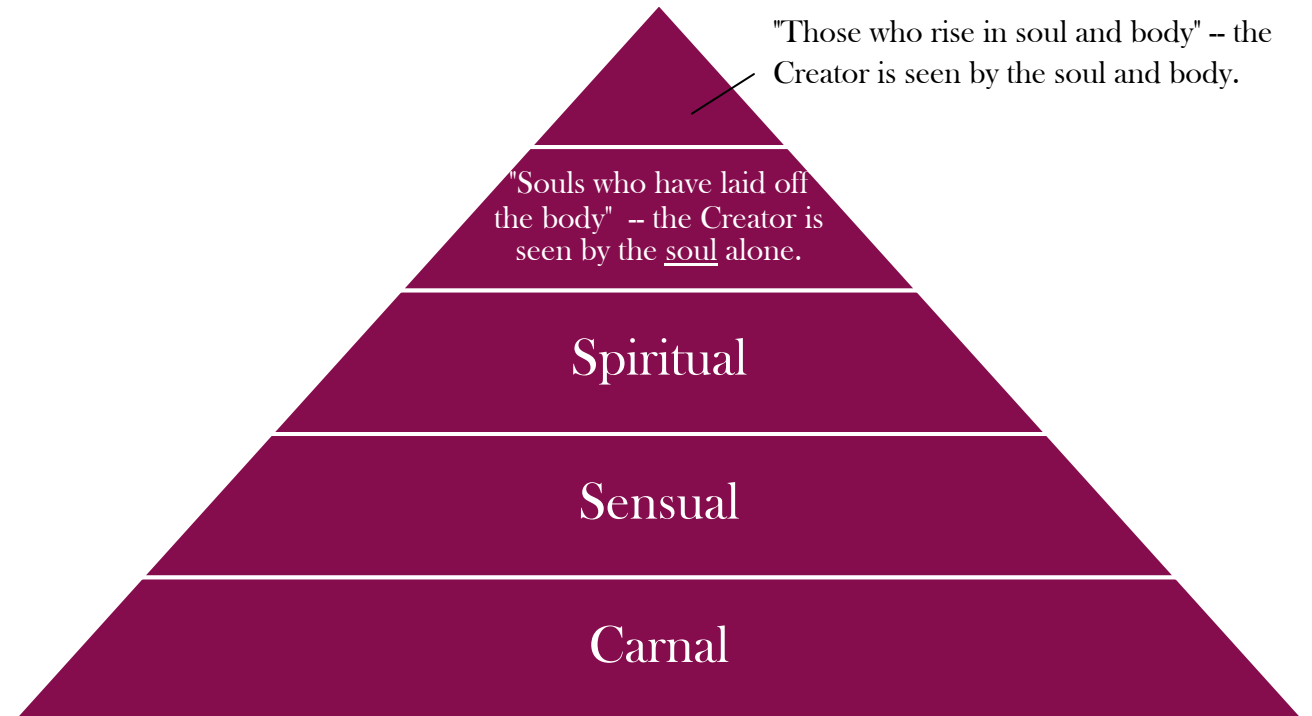
HUGH OF ST VICOR, *ON THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH*, I:6.1



Body-soul unity:
The ascent to God

The significance of the body-soul relation: ascent to God

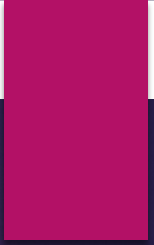
- Hugh of St Victor: Man's "interior ark" is divided into five storeys representing five states signifying the person's gradually increasing vision of the Creator. -- Hugh of St Victor, *Noah's Ark (De Arca Noe Morali)*, I:15



The five states

“ Man occupies the fifth storey, together with the birds. The vigour of reason and intelligence is denoted by man, and the mobility of incorruptible nature by the birds. When, therefore, [...] ‘this mortal shall have put on immortality,’ then we, being spiritual in mind and body equally, will after our small measure understand everything through the illumination of our minds, and have power to be everywhere through the lightness of our incorruptible bodies.”

HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *NOAH'S ARK*, I:15, P. 69, TRANS. BY A RELIGIOUS OF C. S. M. V.



“

Our minds will fly by contemplation, our bodies will fly on account of incorruption. We shall perceive with our mind, and in a manner of speaking we shall perceive with our bodies too; for, when our bodily senses are themselves converted into reason, and reason into understanding, then understanding will pass over into God, to whom we shall be united through the one Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ.

”

HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *NOAH'S ARK*, I:15, P. 69, TRANS. BY A RELIGIOUS OF C. S. M. V.

Summary and conclusions

Further reading – Primary sources

Aelred of Rievaulx. *Dialogue on the Soul*. Trans. with and Introduction by C. H. Talbot. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1981.

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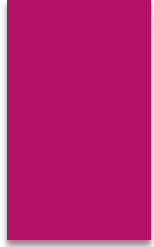
Further reading - Secondary sources, continued.

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McGinn, Bernard. *Three Treatises on Man: A Cistercian Anthropology*. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1977. [Contains translations of William of St Thierry, Isaac of Stella, and the anonymous *On the Spirit and the Soul*. (12th-century treatise)]

Images

- ▶ *Bollard with a Fisherman*. Late Roman or Byzantine. (Early 5th c.) Public Domain.
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/468606>
- ▶ Vittore Carpaccio. *St Augustine in His Study*. (1502) Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.
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- ▶ Federico Zuccaro (Zuccari). *Paradise*. (1565-1577) Public Domain.
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/341646>.



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