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On a body-switching argument in defence of the immateriality of human nature

Pirooz Fatoorchi

Abstract
In an earlier paper in *Theoria*, I discussed an argument based on the idea of “soul-switching” that attempted to undermine the immaterialist account of human beings. The present paper deals with a parity argument against that argument in which the idea of “body-switching” plays a pivotal role. I call these two arguments, that have been reported by Razi (d. 1210), respectively “the soul-switching argument” and “the body-switching argument”. After some introductory remarks, section 2 of the paper describes the structure of the latter argument. Section 3 considers some philosophical discussions in the ancient, modern, and contemporary eras in which the idea of body-switching (or some similar conception) plays a major role. In the following section 4, some criticisms of the argument are discussed and a general response that is meant to cover a broad range of objections is considered. This paper shows that the body-switching argument reported by Razi is a methodological antecedent of several contemporary arguments in defence of substance dualism.

KEYWORDS
body-switching, human nature, immaterialism, materialism, personal identity, Razi, soul, soul-switching

1 INTRODUCTION

It is not easy to find an uncontroversial example of a medieval Latin thinker who conceives of the human person in purely material terms without any immaterial element or aspect. 1 Because they were nearly all Aristotelians, they did not believe that humans consist of matter alone. Their Christian faith in resurrection of the dead also gave significant motivation for believing in the immateriality of at least the intellectual soul (although they did disagree about whether this

1There were indeed a number of Christian thinkers in the patristic period (through the sixth century AD) who held that the human soul is material. As Marcia Colish points out, “they did so influenced by the Stoic principle that everything that acts is a body (which includes God as well as the human soul); among these early Christian thinkers are: Tertullian, Lactantius, Cassian, Hilary of Poitiers, Faustus of Riez, and Cassiodorus” (personal communication, October 22, 2012); cf. also her discussion of this topic in Colish (1985, pp. 24, 43, 121–124, 128–129, 249–252).