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Perceiving Other Animate Minds in Augustine

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*Abstract:* This paper dispels the Cartesian reading of Augustine's treatment of mind and other minds by examining key passages from *De Trinitate* and *De Civitate Dei*. While Augustine does vigorously argue that mind is indubitable and immaterial, he disavows the fundamental thesis of the dualistic tradition: the separation of invisible spirit and visible body. The immediate self-awareness of mind includes awareness of life, that is, of animating a body. Each of us animates our own body; seeing other animated bodies enables us to see other animating souls or minds. Augustine's affirmation of animation lets us perceive that other minds are present, but Descartes' denial of animation renders others ineluctably absent. Augustine's soul is no ghost, because his body is no machine.

Gilbert Ryle memorably describes Descartes' philosophy of mind as subscribing to "the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine."<sup>1</sup> Descartes separates the human into two entities: one that is mental, immaterial, and private, and another that is physical, mechanical, and public. Such a separation engenders the problem of other minds. As Ryle puts it: "Direct access to the working of a mind is the privilege of that mind itself; in default of such privileged access, the workings of one mind are inevitably occult to everyone else. For the supposed arguments from bodily movements similar to their own to mental workings similar to their own would lack any possibility of observational corroboration."<sup>2</sup> As Ryle sees it, the trouble with analogy is the absence of perception to support it. Ryle's critique finds a perhaps unlikely ally in the figure of Saint Augustine. While Augustine does vigorously argue that the mind is indubitable and immaterial, he disavows the fundamental thesis of the dualistic tradition: the separation of invisible spirit and visible body.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949), 15–6.

<sup>2</sup> *The Concept of Mind*, 14–5.

Now the reasoning of the philosophers asserts that intelligible things are perceived by the vision of the mind and sensible things—that is, corporeal things—by the body’s senses, whereas the mind cannot observe intelligible things by means of the body, nor corporeal things simply by its own activity. ... But this reasoning is shown to be ridiculous both by true reason and by prophetic authority.<sup>3</sup>

He thinks the dogma merits ridicule, because, among other things, we clearly perceive other minds through our bodily senses. This passage is the key to Augustine’s discussion of other minds. His interest in the problem of other minds is not generated by a commitment to dualism; instead, he introduces the topic of other minds to argue *against* the separation of mind and body. Now, the joint affirmation of the immateriality of mind and the perception of other minds might appear puzzling. Augustine can maintain that we perceive other minds, because he subscribes to the classical doctrine of the rational soul as animating principle; his self-awareness, then, includes awareness of animating a body and he thinks that, in seeing another animated body, we see another human soul. Augustine’s soul is no ghost, because his body is no machine.

While Augustine is often taken to be Cartesian or “nearly” Cartesian, the animate body opens a gulf between Descartes and Augustine, and I think it is time to get Augustine out of Descartes’s shadow.<sup>4</sup> To this end, it is helpful to distinguish two related problems: the mind-body problem and the problem of other minds. Concerning the first, scholars such as Peter King

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<sup>3</sup> *De civitate Dei libri I–X, libri XI–XII*, ed. Bernardus Dombart and Alphonsus Kalb, *Corpus christianorum series latina* 47–8 (Turnholti: Typographi Brepols, 1955); *The City of God*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22.29: “Ratiocinatio quippe illa philosophorum, qua disputant ita mentis aspectu intellegibilia uideri et sensu corporis sensibilia, id est corporalia, ut nec intellegibilia per corpus nec corporalia per se ipsam mens ualeat intueri, .... Sed istam ratiocinationem et uera ratio et prophetica inridet auctoritas.” Unless otherwise noted, I follow the English translation mentioned in a text’s first citation.

<sup>4</sup> In the editor’s introduction to *On the Trinity*, Gareth Matthews refers to “Augustine’s nearly Cartesian philosophy of mind” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xii. Matthews had developed the point at greater length in the book, *Thought’s Ego in Augustine and Descartes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992). He does acknowledge one important difference: Augustine thinks animals are sentient with powers that anticipate our own. See “Augustine and Descartes on the Souls of Animals,” in *From Soul to Self*, ed. M. James C. Crabbe (London: Routledge, 1999), 102–6. For a similar identification of Augustine and Descartes, see Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Since Menn takes a more historical approach, he naturally regards Descartes as an Augustinian rather than Augustine as a Cartesian. Charles Taylor thinks Augustine is the first to adopt the first-person-point-of-view that engenders, some centuries later, the Cartesian problem of the external world. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 134.

and Peter Burnell have recently made the case that Augustine is not a substance dualist and so stands outside of the Cartesian framework.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the human person is a single mind-body composite. Concerning the problem of other minds, the situation is less sanguine. T. Michael McNulty, SJ, erroneously believing that Augustine was a dualist, authored a critical account of Augustine in terms of Malcolm's critique of the argument from analogy.<sup>6</sup> The principal scholar to relate Augustine to the contemporary problem of other minds is Gareth Matthews, who judges—mistakenly in my view—that Augustine's position is Cartesian and that it deploys an inference based on analogy. Matthews' view remains influential: Anita Avramides, Fergus Kerr, and Gideon Manning subscribe to his Cartesian reading of Augustine on other minds.<sup>7</sup> Even Gerard O'Daly, who does not mention Descartes, nonetheless thinks Augustine appeals to inference in order to bridge self and other.<sup>8</sup> Charles Brittain provides a stark alternative to this interpretive paradigm. He argues that Augustine has us perceive rather than infer other minds.<sup>9</sup> In this way, he challenges one aspect of the Cartesian reading of Augustine, but he does not show where Matthews goes wrong and he does not explain Augustine's curious appeal to analogy.

To put to rest the Cartesian reading of Augustine on mind and other minds, I first revisit the question of mind and body to show that the Augustinian *cogito*, unlike the Cartesian variant,

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<sup>5</sup> Peter King, "Why Isn't the Mind-Body Problem Medieval?" *Forming the Mind. Essays on the Internal Senses and the Mind/Body Problem from Avicenna to the Medieval Enlightenment*, ed. H. Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer: 2007), 187–205, at 201–3, and "Body and Soul," *Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), 505–24, at 506–8. Peter Burnell, *The Augustinian Person* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 18–44.

<sup>6</sup> "Augustine's Argument for the Existence of Other Souls," *Modern Schoolman* 48 (1970): 19–24.

<sup>7</sup> *Other Minds* (London: Routledge, 2001), 47–9, "Augustine and Aquinas in the Light of Postmodern Thought: Other Minds Skepticism," in *Augustine and Postmodern Thought: A New Alliance Against Modernity?*, ed. L. Boeve, M. Lamberigts, and M. Wisse (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2009), 109n19, and "Descartes, Other Minds and Impossible Human Bodies," *Philosophers' Imprint* 12 (2012): 1–24, at 18, respectively.

<sup>8</sup> *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 21: "Furthermore, just as we are consciously aware of possessing this power of self-movement, so too can we infer its presence in other living entities, where there can be no question of our directly perceiving its presence, but only of inferring from its observable effects (*trin.* 8.9)."

<sup>9</sup> "Non-Rational Perception in the Stoics and Augustine," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. XXII ed. David Sedley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 253–307.

includes reference to life and animation. Second, I argue that because Augustine’s self-awareness includes awareness of animating a body, the perception of other animated bodies enables perception of other animating minds. This analogical perception of others happens thanks to an animal power, the interior sense, that gives us awareness of both ourselves and others through bodily movement. Augustine’s question of other minds is not of the familiar Cartesian sort: What justification do I have for thinking this body is populated by another mind? That epistemological question invites the familiar response: an inference bridges manifest movement and a hidden mover, an inference supported by the experience of being a mind that moves one’s own body. Rather Augustine’s question is the following: How do I become aware of the lives of other animals in general and the lives of other humans in particular? This question involves an unfamiliar answer: movement enables direct access to the life of another. No inference is needed. In this way, Augustine’s analogical perception differs from analogical inference, which is characteristic of the Cartesian tradition and was given influential expression by Bertrand Russell. I will not argue that analogical inference is false and analogical perception correct, because I have already done so at length in *Ostension: Word Learning and the Embodied Mind*.<sup>10</sup> My goal instead is to present the authentic Augustinian position and to distinguish it from the dominant Cartesian framework for addressing other minds. It is an exercise in historical interpretation and critical confrontation.

A note on terminology: Augustine speaks of “soul” in two ways. First, he thinks all animals have an animating principle, which he calls “soul” (*anima*). The soul of the rational animal he also terms “rational soul” (*animus*), which is sometimes used in a narrower sense to

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<sup>10</sup> (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 131–70.

denote the rational soul's best part, "mind" (*mens*).<sup>11</sup> Descartes denies that there is such a thing as animation, and consequently he sees no need for an animating principle; instead, he thinks soul means simply mind. I will follow Augustine in speaking of soul in two ways: as the principle of animation that is found in all animals and as the animating principle that is the rational soul in the case of humans. For Augustine, the rational soul, whose best part is mind, is an animating soul. He distinguishes but does not separate mind and animation. Humans are animating minds and animated bodies: "Man is a rational substance consisting of soul and body."<sup>12</sup>

## I.

*Augustine's Self-Awareness Includes Animation.* In *De trinitate*, Augustine invites us to consider what is unique about mind. If we consider such things as angels, the wills of other human beings, or even our own faces, we realize that each in some way or another is absent to us, but not so with our minds: "But when it is said to the mind: 'Know thyself,' it knows itself at the very instant in which it understands the word 'thyself'; and it knows itself for no other reason than that it is present to itself."<sup>13</sup> He accordingly asserts as a fundamental principle that "every mind knows and is certain concerning itself."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 7. For the Latin background, see the classic study by Richard Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 168–73.

<sup>12</sup> *De trinitate libri I–XIII, XIV–XV*, ed. W. J. Mountain and Fr. Glorie, *Corpus christianorum series latina* 50–50a (Turnhout: Typographi Brepols, 1968); *On the Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 15.7.11: "Homo est substantia rationalis constans ex anima et corpore."

<sup>13</sup> *De trinitate* 10.9.12: "Sed cum dicitur menti: *Cognosce te ipsam*, eo ictu quo intellegit quod dictum est *te ipsam* cognoscit se ipsam, nec ob aliud quam eo quod sibi praesens est."

<sup>14</sup> *De trinitate* 10.10.14: "omnes mentes de se ipsis nosse certasque esse."

To show the certainty of the mind, Augustine provides a “transcendental” argument (by transcendental, I mean he assumes a given act and works out the conditions it presupposes).<sup>15</sup>

First, he observes that there is a variety of opinions concerning whether material causes account for our minds and if so what kinds of material things are responsible:

For men have doubted whether the power to live, to remember, to understand, to will, to think, to know, and to judge is due to air, to fire, or to the brain, or to the blood, or to atoms, or to a fifth body—I do not know what it is—but it differs from the customary four elements; or whether the combining or the orderly arrangement of the flesh is capable of producing these effects; one endeavors to maintain this opinion, another that opinion.<sup>16</sup>

Second, he argues that the act of doubting presupposes a host of cognitive abilities that are therefore themselves immune from doubt.

On the other hand who would doubt that he lives, remembers, understands, wills, thinks, knows, and judges? For even if he doubts, he lives; if he doubts, he remembers why he doubts; if he doubts, he understands that he doubts; if he doubts, he wishes to be certain; if he doubts, he thinks; if he doubts, he knows that he does not know; if he doubts, he judges that he ought not to consent rashly. *Whoever then doubts about anything else ought never to doubt about all of these; for if they were not, he would be unable to doubt about anything at all.*<sup>17</sup>

Unlike purported material explanations of the mind, the mind itself is most certain, for the powers of the mind make doubt possible. Therefore, they cannot be subject to doubt. Augustine, then, has provided two reasons for maintaining the certainty of mind: its unique presence and its immunity from doubt.

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<sup>15</sup> For this use of “transcendental,” see John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 183.

<sup>16</sup> *De trinitate* 10.10.14: “Vtrum enim aeris sit uis uiuendi, reminiscendi, intellegendi, uolendi, cogitandi, sciendi, iudicandi; an ignis, an cerebri, an sanguinis, an atomorum, an praeter usitata quattuor elementa quinti nescio cuius corporis, an ipsius carnis nostrae compago uel temperamentum haec efficere ualeat dubitauerunt homines, et alius hoc, alius illud affirmare conatus est.”

<sup>17</sup> *De trinitate* 10.10.14, my emphasis: “Viure se tamen et meminisse et intellegere et uelle et cogitare et scire et iudicare quis dubitet? Quandoquidem etiam si dubitat, uiuit; si dubitat, unde dubitet meminit; si dubitat, dubitare se intellegit; si dubitat, certus esse uult; si dubitat, cogitate; si dubitat, scit se nescire; si dubitat, iudicat non se temere consentire oportere. *Quisquis igitur alicunde dubitat de his omnibus dubitare non debet quae si non essent, de ulla re dubitare non posset.*” The argument also appears in *De libero arbitrio* 2.3.7.20 and *De ciuitate Dei* 11.26.

Like Descartes, Augustine uses these features to argue for the soul's immateriality. He employs several arguments, but the one most relevant for setting up the problem of other minds is the one from self-presence.<sup>18</sup> If the mind were a body, such as the brain or a collection of particles in fields of force, the body it was would be immediately present. However, no such bodily candidate for mind is immediately present; rather they are all experienced through some kind of representation.

But if it were any one of them, it would think this one in a different manner than the rest. That is to say, it would not think it through an imaginary phantasy, as absent things or something of the same kind are thought which have been touched by the sense of the body, but it would think it by a kind of inward presence not feigned but real—for there is nothing more present to it than itself; just as it thinks that it lives, and remembers, and understands, and wills.<sup>19</sup>

We might think of ourselves as brains. But if that is what we were we would not have to picture brains to ourselves to consider one. Rather, brains would be given to us in the very same way in which we have self-awareness. Since no material cause of our mind is present in the way that mind is to itself, Augustine concludes that the mind is not identifiable with any such cause.

Even in Descartes' time, commentators noted affinities between Augustine and Descartes.<sup>20</sup> Both offer a transcendental rejoinder to skepticism: doubting presupposes certain

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<sup>18</sup> *Argument from knowledge*: To know something is to know what it is. If Augustine is right that the self can seek itself only because it is in some sense already known (his version of the *Meno* problem), then the self must know its substance. Material causes, then, are not candidates for this substance, since our immediate knowledge does not include material causes of the mind. *Argument from certainty*: Closely related to the above argument is another. The mind is certain of itself but uncertain whether and what kind of body it would be; therefore, it cannot be a body. For trenchant analysis, see Matthews, *Augustine* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 43–52.

<sup>19</sup> *De trinitate* 10.10.16: “Si quid autem horum esset, aliter id quam cetera cogitaret, non scilicet per imaginale figmentum sicut cogitantur absentia quae sensu coporis tacta sunt, siue omnino ipsa siue eiusdem generis aliqua, sed quadam interiore non simulata sed uera praesentia (non enim quidquam illi est se ipsa praesentius), sicut cogitat uiuere se et meminisse et intellegere et uelle se.”

<sup>20</sup> Antoine Arnauld calls attention to the parallel with *De libero arbitrio* in the fourth set of objections to the *Meditations*. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 138–153, at 139. At the instigation of Coluius, Descartes looked up the passage in *De civitate Dei* but not (apparently) in *De trinitate*; he consequently seems unaware that Augustine likewise uses the argument to establish the immateriality of mind. Descartes writes, “He goes on to show that there is a certain likeness of the Trinity in us.... I, on the other hand, use the argument to show that this *I* which is thinking is an immaterial substance with no bodily element. These are two different things.” *The Philosophical*

indubitable soul powers. Both point to the immediacy of self-awareness to argue for the irreducibility of mind to matter. As we have seen, however, even in these two affinities a chief difference inserts itself again and again. For Descartes, mind is an immaterial substance, immediately known, which is characterized by certain acts: “A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions.”<sup>21</sup> He expressly excludes the classical act of animation: “But what of the attributes assigned to the soul? Nutrition or movement? Since now I do not have a body, these are mere fabrications.”<sup>22</sup> By contrast, Augustine expressly includes life and animation among the indubitable truths of the self. Whether he is awake or asleep, sane or insane, mistaken or correct, he is alive: “Let a thousand kinds of optical illusions be placed before one who says: ‘I know that I live’; he will fear none of them, since even he who is deceived, lives.”<sup>23</sup> For Augustine, then, we can make the inference, *cogito, ergo vivo*. Only because I am alive can I understand.

We now arrive at the critical point for dispelling the Cartesian reading of Augustine, which trades on the answer to the following question: What does “life” mean in this context? Matthews notes that “life” is present on Augustine’s list of mind’s features while absent on Descartes’, but he regards this difference as merely semantic. He takes “life” to be synonymous with existence as in the question, “Is there life after death?” When understood in this way, there is no difference between the two thinkers: “If we understand ‘living’ that way, Augustine’s account of what a mind indubitably is makes a mind what Descartes calls a ‘thinking thing’ (*res*

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*Writings of Descartes*, vol. III, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 159.

<sup>21</sup> *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II, 19.

<sup>22</sup> *Meditations*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> *De trinitate* 15.12.21: “Mille itaque fallacium uisorum genera obiciantur ei qui dicit: ‘Scio me uiuere.’ Nihil horum timebit quando et qui fallitur uiuit.”



*cogitans*).<sup>24</sup> In Matthews' favor, Augustine does sometimes speak in this way. He notes we love the deceased Apostle, because "we believe that what we love in him lives even now, for we love his just rational soul [*animus*]."<sup>25</sup> But I think this interpretation fails to distinguish metaphysical and epistemological possibility. For Augustine, it is metaphysically possible for life to exist independent of the body as it does in the case of a deceased person or, in a very different way, God.<sup>26</sup> However, it is not epistemologically possible for a living human being to be unaware of animating his or her body. Augustine locates human understanding squarely in the existing human animal. Some bodies such as rocks merely exist. Some bodies such as squirrels not only exist but also live, i.e., they move about and manifest their affective engagement with things. And some bodies, namely human ones, not only exist and move about but also understand:

And nobody doubts that no one understands who does not live, and that no one lives who does not exist. Therefore, it follows that *whatever understands also exists and lives, not as a corpse exists which does not live*, nor as the soul of a beast lives which does not understand, *but in its own proper and more exalted manner*.<sup>27</sup>

To be a live human being is to know one lives as an animated body, because human understanding is logically related to human bodily life. To be human is to be the sort of thing that not only is and lives but also understands. For Augustine, it just doesn't make sense to think of human understanding without a human body and without a human life. A second reason supporting the bodily character of human life in Augustine comes from the fact that he attributes

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<sup>24</sup> "Editor's Introduction," xx and xxvi. His principal justification is the supposition that the phrase in *De civitate Dei*, "If I am mistaken, I exist" and the phrase in *De trinitate*, "If I am mistaken, I live," are identical in meaning. For the same point, see *Thought's Ego*, 42, and "Augustine and Descartes on the Souls of Animals," 106n7. See *De civitate Dei* 11.26.

<sup>25</sup> *De trinitate* 8.6.9: "...id quod in illo amamus etiam nunc uiuere credimus; amamus enim animum iustum."

<sup>26</sup> *De civitate Dei* 8.6.

<sup>27</sup> *De trinitate* 10.10.13, translation modified and emphases added: "Et nulli est dubium nec quemquam intellegere qui non uiuat, nec quemquam uiuere qui non sit. Ergo consequenter *et esse et uiuere id quod intellegit, non sicuti est cadauer quod non uiuit, nec sicut uiuit anima quae non intellegit, sed proprio quodam eodemque praestantiore modo.*"

our awareness of specifically human life to a generically animal power, interior sense. In *De civitate Dei*, he writes:

Moreover, each man is aware of his own life: the life which he now lives in the body and which causes his earthly members to grow and be alive; but he is aware of it, not by means of the body's eyes, but through an interior sense.<sup>28</sup>

Augustine suggestion that each of us cannot doubt the fact that we are living amounts to the claim that each of us cannot doubt the fact that we are animate beings that share the same basic power of life with other animals.

How can Augustine affirm that self-awareness is non-representational and yet includes awareness of animating one's body? He does not have occasion to explain this curious conjunction, because he makes each claim in different texts, but I think it can be defended using the principles at his disposal. If Augustine thinks about Alypius that will very likely involve remembering what he looks like. The awareness of bodies other than our own does involve some kind of representation for Augustine. But when Augustine considers his own immediate self-awareness including the animation of his own body, there is no representation. He does not have to picture to himself what he looks like from the outside, as it were, as in a picture or a mirror image. The interior sense, unlike the exterior senses, is in immediate and inward contact with its object. Still, the puzzle lingers: How can a non-representational awareness have as its object a body? I think the way to unravel the puzzle is to see that awareness of animation is not in the first place awareness of being, as it were, attached to a body. Awareness of animation is rather awareness of the ability to perceive and move about, to go towards and away from the bodies one encounters in one's surroundings. It concerns a particular kind of movement saturated with affectivity, that is, desire and its fulfillment. As we will see in the following section, he speaks of

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<sup>28</sup> *De civitate Dei* 22.29: "Deinde uitam quidem suam, qua nunc uiuit in corpore et haec terrena membra uegetat facitque uiuentia, interior sensu quisque, non per corporeos oculos nouit." In the early text, *De beata vita* 2.7, Augustine maintains that we are certain of having both life and a body.

just this sort of movement when he speaks of the interior sense at work in humans and other animals. When Augustine says we have an immediate awareness of being alive, that is, of animating a body, he is thinking of the second, not the first proposition:

I am a soul attached to a body (This is *not* Augustinian)

I can perceive and move about in my surroundings (This is Augustinian)

Now, the second proposition is only possible for an animate being, one that is a mixture of soul and body, but the immediate awareness does not include a representation of the body. Unlike Descartes, Augustine's case for the immateriality of the mind does not lead away from the body. Instead, he thinks soul and body constitute an "indescribable mixture."<sup>29</sup> The immediate, non-representational awareness of self is complex. Each person is aware not simply of animating a body (being an *anima*) and not simply of specifically rational functions (being a *mens*) but of animating a body as a rational soul (being an *animus*). Augustine's rational soul is no ghost.

## II.

*Perceiving Other Animate Minds by Analogy.* Augustine thinks we know what a rational soul is by having one. "We have never seen it with our eyes, nor formed a general or special idea of it from any similarity with other souls that we have seen, but rather, as I said, because we also have a soul [*animus*]. For what is so intimately known, and what knows itself to be itself, than that through which all other things are likewise known, that is, the soul [*animus*] itself."<sup>30</sup> If we know about our own souls by having one, how do we know about the souls of other human beings and other animals? Matthews notes that Augustine is the first thinker to formulate and

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<sup>29</sup> See O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, 40–5.

<sup>30</sup> *De trinitate* 8.6.9: "[N]eque enim umquam oculis uidimus et ex similitudine uisorum plurium notionem generalem specialemue percepimus, sed potius, ut dixi, quia et nos habemus. Quid enim tam intime scitur seque ipsum esse sentit quam id quo etiam cetera sentiuntur, id est ipse animus?"

answer the problem of other minds.<sup>31</sup> Yet Augustine's approach is not epistemological. He does not ask whether I can be certain that a particular body is populated by another mind. Rather, he wants to ask what we might call a phenomenological question concerning how another person is experienced. Matthews formulates the non-epistemological question as follows: "Augustine wants to explain how it ever occurs to us (or to beasts, for that matter) to attribute minds, or souls, to other beings."<sup>32</sup> Augustine's answer is analogical perception.

Augustine develops his answer in two places: the *De trinitate* 8 (c. 410–416) and *De civitate Dei* 22 (c. 427). While scholars typically ignore the latter, it clarifies and expands the surprising claims of the former.<sup>33</sup> The two accounts are harmonious, but they have different emphases that come, I think, from the different theological purposes the philosophical analyses are pressed to serve. In *De trinitate*, he considers how the Trinity might be loved even though it is unknown. He develops an analogy with the unknown human person we have heard about from others, and to make sense of this analogy, he contrasts it with the ordinary case of knowing someone we know by perceiving. He considers three cases of love:

1. The Trinity, which is absent to our experience
2. A person who is absent to our experience, such as the Apostle Paul
3. A person present to our experience

The first is analogous to the second but different from the third. It is necessary to spell this out, because Brittain and other commentators neglect the difference between two and three and therefore misconstrue the role accorded to analogy in the account. I will return to this below. In *De trinitate*, Augustine is trying to make sense of the sort of knowledge we have of the absent God that affords the possibility of loving him. By contrast, in the *De civitate Dei*, Augustine is trying to make sense of the sort of perception we will have of the present God in heaven and so

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<sup>31</sup> *Augustine*, 54.

<sup>32</sup> *Thought's Ego in Augustine and Descartes*, 121.

<sup>33</sup> McNulty, Matthews, and O'Daly do, but Brittain does not.

compares it directly with the present perception of others in this life. Here are the two situations he considers:

1. The Trinity, which will be present to our experience in heaven
2. A person present to our experience

In particular, he wants to make the case that the bodily senses will contribute to our awareness of God, and he thinks they will do so in a way similar to that in which they, in this life, contribute to our perception of the invisible lives of other people we perceive. The account of a person present to our experience is the same in both texts, but in keeping with their different contexts, they highlight something different. The *De trinitate* text focuses on the resources the self contributes precisely as a means of making sense of relating to absent people and the hidden Trinity. The *De civitate Dei* text focuses on the direct presence of the other as it is inscribed in the interplay of our living bodies to make sense of the presence of God in the life to come. I will analyze the two texts in tandem in order to show first that they advocate analogical perception of others and second that this analogy of self and other happens thanks to a non-rational process that is built into animal awareness. I have broken the texts into numbered parts for ease of reference.

In the *De civitate Dei*, Augustine undermines the philosophical divide of body and spirit, by pointing to the fact that we *perceive* the life of others; no guesswork or inference to something absent occurs:

[1] In this life, after all, as soon as we become aware of the men among whom we live, we do not merely believe that they are alive and displaying vital motions; we see it, beyond any doubt, by means of our bodies, [2] though we are not able to see their life without their bodies.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *De civitate Dei* 22.29: “[1] Sed sicut homines, inter quos uiuentes motusque uitales exerentes uiuimus, mox ut aspiciamus, non credimus uiuere, sed uidemus, [2] cum eorum uitam sine corporibus uidere nequeamus, quam tamen in eis per corpora remota omni ambiguitate conspiciamus.” For the theological implications of this philosophical claim, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol. 1: Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. Joseph Fessio, SJ, and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 439–40.

In [1] Augustine maintains, against the Platonists, that we see (*videmus, conspicimus*) the lives of others by means of our bodily eyes. As [2] makes clear, this is a complex or supported perception but it does not involve a rational process. Augustine has more to say about how this occurs. In *De trinitate*, he contrasts what the eyes strictly see with what we nonetheless perceive. The eyes see a bodily movement not another animating principle, and yet in and through such visible bodily movement we perceive the invisible animating principle:

[3] For we recognize the movements of bodies also from their resemblance to ourselves, and from this fact we perceive that others live besides ourselves, since we also move our body in living, as we observe these bodies to be moved. [4] For even when a living body is moved, there is no way opened for our eyes to see the rational soul [*animus*], a thing which cannot be seen with the eyes; but we perceive that something is present within that bulk, such as is present in us, so that we are able to move our bulk in a similar way, and this is the life and the soul [*anima*].<sup>35</sup>

In [3] Augustine affirms the perception of other souls and invokes movement and analogy as its support. I will examine this claim in the next section. In [4] Augustine makes an important distinction. The genuine perception of another soul does not equate with the perception of mind (*mens*). Rather, what we perceive is a soul (*anima*). To arrive at perception of the rational soul (an *anima* with *mens*, i.e., an *animus*) requires applying what we know from our own case to what the animate analogy supports. Knowing an animate mind from our own case, we can by analogy perceive and know the animate minds of other animate beings. I will return to this point in the next section. In [1]–[4], the other genuinely appears through bodily, animate movement. We do not see behavior and infer soul; we see animate movement and on that basis perceive the presence of soul in the other.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *De trinitate* 8.6.9: “[3] Nam et motus corporum quibus praeter nos alios uiuere sentimus ex nostra similitudine agnoscimus quia et nos ita mouemus corpus uiuendo sicut illa corpora moueri aduertimus. [4] Neque enim cum corpus uiuum mouetur aperitur ulla uia oculis nostris ad uidendum animum, rem quae oculis uideri non potest; sed illi moli aliquid inesse sentimus quale nobis inest ad mouendam similiter molem nostram, quod est uita et anima.”

<sup>36</sup> The phrase “perceive the presence” is pleonastic for Augustine. In *De ciuitate Dei* 11.3, he says that things are *present* insofar as they are “before our senses” (*prae sensibus*), whether exterior or interior.

Augustine maintains both that we perceive others and that some sort of analogy is at work. The invocation of analogy leads some interpreters to undermine the genuine perception of other minds and instead to fit Augustine to the familiar Argument for the Existence of Other Minds via Analogical Inference. However, as McNulty rightfully observes, “We can make this a straightforward argument from analogy only by reading ‘infer’ for ‘perceive’ and ignoring the claim that no reasoning process is involved. This, however, seems to do undue violence to the text.”<sup>37</sup> Augustine’s analogical perception is not a rational process, for it is something that non-rational animals likewise perform. In *De trinitate*, he writes:

[5] Nor is this [perception of others] the property, so to speak, of human prudence and reason. For even beasts perceive the fact that not only do they themselves live, but also that they live with others like them and the one with the other, and that we ourselves do so. [6] Nor do they see our souls [*animas*] except through the movements of our bodies, and that at once and very easily by a sort of natural concord.<sup>38</sup>

As [5] makes clear, awareness of other souls happens thanks to a basically animal power, for even animals can see our souls. To explain the animal power, in [6] he again invokes a support for perception given by movement and some sort of “natural concord.” In the *De civitate Dei*, he clarifies that this concord is an achievement of interior sense, a power enjoyed by all animals, humans included.<sup>39</sup> He writes:

[7] Moreover, each man is aware of his own life: the life which he now lives in the body and which causes his earthly members to grow and be alive; but he is aware of it, not by means of the body’s eyes, but through an interior sense. [8] The life of others, however, though it is invisible, he sees with the bodily eye. For how do we distinguish between living bodies and non-living objects, except by seeing simultaneously both the body and

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<sup>37</sup> “Augustine’s Argument for the Existence of Other Souls,” 21.

<sup>38</sup> *De trinitate*, VIII.6.9: “[5] Neque quasi humanae prudentiae rationisque proprium est. Et bestiae quippe sentiunt uiuere non tantum se ipsas sed etiam inuicem atque alterutrum et nos ipsos, [6] nec animas nostras uident sed ex motibus corporis idque statim et facillime quadam conspiratione naturali.” Matthews misunderstands this passage to mean that humans are aware of others in one way and non-human animals in another, but the *De civitate Dei* text, below, he does not consider. *Augustine*, 56.

<sup>39</sup> *De civitate Dei* 22.29 and *De libero arbitrio* 2.5.12.44.

the life, which we cannot see other than with the bodily eye? But a life without a body we cannot see with the bodily eye.<sup>40</sup>

Above, we already had occasion to quote [7] when pointing out that Augustinian self-awareness includes awareness of animating one's body. It is the generically animal power of the interior sense that accomplishes this self-awareness. Now, in [8] Augustine is in a position to explain the complex but non-rational perception animals enjoy of other animals: we sense our own lives thanks to the interior sense, and we sense the lives of others through our exterior senses conjoined with our interior sense. Our interior sense not only lets us sense our own interior. When conjoined with the exterior sensory awareness of animate movement, our interior sense lets us sense (and not infer) the awareness of others. The point, I take it, is that the difference between self and other is not that one is given to experience and the other is not. Both are genuinely given to experience as invisible lives but they are given differently. Each knows of himself or herself through interior sense alone; each knows of the other thanks to both interior and exterior senses in which the exterior senses afford the opportunity for the interior sense to perceive the interior of *another* in such a way that he or she appears as a different self. The content of the exterior senses motivates the perception of the other via interior sense. For if the exterior senses perceive a body devoid of movement, there will be no concomitant perception via interior sense of the life of the other. There will instead be the perception of a corpse. On the other hand, if the exterior senses make present an animate body moving in sensible ways, there will be concomitant perception via interior sense of the life of the other. This sense of movement comes, as he makes clear in [3] and [4], from our awareness of ourselves as animate movers, a sense which naturally admits of multiple instantiations. Thus, Augustine's account of animal

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<sup>40</sup> *De civitate Dei* 22.29: “[7] Deinde uitam quidem suam, qua nunc uiuit in corpore et haec terrena membra uegetat facitque uiuentia, interior sensu quisque, non per corporeos oculos nouit; [8] aliorum uero uitas, cum sint inuisibiles, per corpus uidet. Nam unde uiuentia discernimus a non uiuentibus corpora, nisi corpora simul uitasque uideamus, quas nisi per corpus uidere non possumus? Vitas autem sine corporibus corporeis oculis non uidemus.”



intersubjectivity trades on the generic power of interior sense that is aware of its own animation in such a way that it can be potentially aware of the animation of other animals through perception. It remains to say more about this sense of movement.

In *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine explains how interior sense is operative in humans and other animals. Humans excel other animals by virtue of reason, which enables them to not only be aware of things but to know that they are alive.<sup>41</sup> In humans, awareness has a cognitive dimension but in animals awareness is simply for the sake of movement: “For if the beast were not aware of its act of perception, it could not otherwise direct its movements toward something, or away from it. This awareness is not ordered towards knowledge, which is the function of reason, but towards movement....”<sup>42</sup> Humans and other animals engage their surroundings, but only human movement is rational and free.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, the movement of all animals, whether rational or non-rational, reveals their awareness of features of their surroundings:

[9] Now the power enabling the animal to see is one thing, that by which it shuns or seeks what it perceives by seeing is something else. The former is located in the eye, the latter within, in the soul itself. [10] The inner sense enables the animal to seek and acquire things that delight and to repel and avoid things that are obnoxious, not only those that are perceived by sight and hearing, but all those which are grasped by the other bodily senses.<sup>44</sup>

If we understand [3] and [4] in light of [10], we can say the following: When we animate movers exteriorly sense animate movement, we simultaneously sense the inward affectivity it reveals.

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<sup>41</sup> *De libero arbitrio* 1.7.16.58. Augustine does not think it is entirely clear whether non-rational animals not only are aware of perceptual objects but also are aware of themselves, but he thinks the fact that they avoid death counts as evidence that they are aware of their life. *De libero arbitrio* 2.4.10.40.

<sup>42</sup> *De libero arbitrio libri tres*, ed. W. M. Green, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, 74 (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1956); *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Robert Russell, OSA (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 2.4.10.38: “Non enim aliter bestia moueret se uel adpetendo aliquid uel fugiendo, nisi se sentire sentiret, non ad sciendum, nam hoc rationis est, sed tantum ad mouendum ....”

<sup>43</sup> *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.14.25.

<sup>44</sup> *De libero arbitrio* 2.3.8.27: “[9] Namque aliud est quo uidet bestia et aliud quo ea quae uidendo sentit uel uitat uel appetit. Ille enim sensus in oculis est, ille autem in ipsa intus anima, [10] quo non solum ea quae uidentur, sed etiam ea quae audiuntur quaeque ceteris capiuntur corporis sensibus, uel adpetunt animalia delectata et adsumunt uel offensa deuitant et respuunt.”

Animate movement includes interiority and exteriority both for oneself and for another.

Confirmation for my reading of Augustine's account of other minds comes from considering his account of word learning in the *Confessions*. There Augustine speculates that what enables the infant to break into speech is the natural power to make sense of animate movement, to sense the animate affectivity such movement discloses:

Moreover, their intention was evident from the movement of their body which is, as it were, the natural vocabulary of all races, and is made with the face and the inclination of the eyes and the movements of other parts of the body, and by the tone of voice which indicates whether the rational soul's affections are to seek and possess or to reject and avoid.<sup>45</sup>

One of the peculiar features of his account is that the caregivers are not trying to teach the infant to speak. Rather, they are going about their lives and Augustine's infant perceives such movement and perceives the affectivity it involves. This animate perception then affords the possibility for the infant's specifically human powers of understanding, rational memory, and will to discern the meaning of words and to employ them for himself.<sup>46</sup> Augustine's philosophy of other minds is rooted in the animate power of movement. Animate minds naturally manifest themselves to others.

In *De trinitate*, Augustine connects the perception of other souls via interior sense and the self-awareness proper to minds:

[11] Therefore, we know the soul [*animus*] of anyone else by knowing our own, and [12] from our own we believe in the soul [*animus*] that we do not know. [13] For we not only perceive a soul [*animus*], [14] but we can also know what a soul is by considering our own, for we have a soul [*animus*].<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Confessionum libri XIII*, ed. Lucas Verheijen, O.S.A., *Corpus christianorum series latina 27* (Turnholti: Typographi Brepoli, 1981); *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1.8.13, translation modified: "Hoc autem eos uelle ex motu corporis aperiebatur tamquam uerbis naturalibus omnium gentium, quae fiunt uultu et nutu oculorum ceteroque membrorum actu et sonitu uocis indicante affectionem animi in petendis, habendis, reiciendis fugiendisue rebus."

<sup>46</sup> I defend this interpretation in *Ostension*, 85–105.

<sup>47</sup> *De trinitate* 8.6.9, translation modified: "[11] Animum igitur cuiuslibet ex nostro nouimus, et [12] ex nostro credimus quem non nouimus. [13] Non enim tantum sentimus animum, [14] sed etiam scire possumus quid sit animus consideratione nostri; habemus enim animum."

Augustine's account of the awareness of other minds involves two levels of powers, one generically animal and one specifically human.

*A generically animal component at work in humans and other animals:* The perception, thanks to movement and interior sense, of another's soul [13]

*A specifically human component:* In the case of perceiving other human beings, the attribution of a *rational* soul to them from one's own case [11] [12] and [14]

Brittain speaks of these as a sensory and a rational stage that works up "internal sensory data" into a "rational concept of mind," but this empiricist language does not square with Augustine's insistence, noted above, that we have an immediate, non-representational awareness of our selves.<sup>48</sup> Instead, Augustine introduces a second level because the rational soul exceeds mere animality and therefore it takes more than animal resources to perceive it as such in others. The first gives us the rational soul as a soul (*animus qua anima*), the second the rational soul as a mind (*animus qua mens*). When we are perceiving an animate being that looks and acts like a human being, we automatically perceive it to have what we have as fellow minds. Even with this specifically human level, Augustine does not speak of inference. Instead, Augustine offers an analogical perception of the other. The movements of the body make visible the invisible life of others on analogy with ourselves.

As we have seen, Augustine maintains not only that the other is perceived, that is, immediately given, but also that such a perception is supported by an analogy of self and other. This peculiar state of affairs occasions the following question: Is it possible to maintain both that something is perceived and that this is done via an analogy? I think the answer is yes, provided that we realize that analogy functions quite differently here than in a Cartesian inferentialist account. Analogy is not called upon to remedy a lack in the perception and justify an inference to

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<sup>48</sup> "Non-Rational Perception," 297.

something that is not perceived; analogy enables us to perceive what is genuinely given in and through another's bodily movement. Allow me to explore the point via an example. Wind is invisible but when we see the branches sway or the leaves blow about we see the wind at work. We do not see things being blown about and then infer wind, nor for that matter is wind reducible to things being blown about. The movements caused by wind, visible, makes us aware of wind, invisible. We perceive but do not infer wind although this perception might involve a kind of analogy. For example, if our only experience of wind came from being indoors looking out through a window, we might be tempted to regard the visible movement as simply a property of the things that moved. Perhaps we would think that the branches were simply shaking themselves. Our perception of wind, it seems to me, is bound up with our being outdoors and experiencing the force of wind blowing against us. Since we have had this experience, we can then be indoors looking out and see wind at work in the movements of the branches. Similarly, Augustine thinks that the perception of another animate soul requires not just perception of movement but awareness of one's own life and causality over movement. Absent such awareness, we might regard bodily movement in behaviorist terms as analyzable without inwardness. With such awareness, however, we see the soul because we see the soul at work. In this way, Augustine subscribes to the principle defended by Edith Stein, Hans Jonas, and Evan Thompson that "life can only be perceived by life."<sup>49</sup> The perception of the life of others requires that we be aware of being alive ourselves. If we bracket our own life, the other will only appear as a machine, whether or not we can find reason to believe it is populated by a ghost.

In *De trinitate*, Augustine distinguishes three modes of perception: seeing with one's bodily eyes, envisioning things unseen, and seeing a living person by means of our bodily eyes

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<sup>49</sup> Stein, *The Problem of Empathy*, 3d ed., trans. Waltraut Stein (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1989), 87; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 91; and Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 162–5.

and our awareness of animating our body. As we have seen, this third mode of perception occurs in an unusual way with the support of analogy or what he terms *conjecture*:

Furthermore, the faith itself which everyone sees to be in his heart if he believes, or does not see there if he does not believe—we know in a different way; not ... as [15] a living man whose soul [*anima*] indeed we do not see but conjecture [*conicimus*] from our own, and [16] from the corporeal motions gaze also in thought upon the living man, as we have acquired knowledge of him by sight.<sup>50</sup>

As this puzzling passage shows, Augustine’s account involves two seemingly mutually exclusive elements: [15] conjecture and [16] perception. Nicolas Malebranche, whom Matthews calls a “close student of Augustine,” handles other minds through conjecture, not perception. He writes, “We conjecture [*conjecturons*] that the souls of other men are of the same sort as our own.”<sup>51</sup> The basis for the conjecture is God’s illumination not the perception of the body: “But I know this with evidence and certainty because it is God who teaches it to me .... But when the body plays a part in what happens in me, I am almost always mistaken in judging others by myself.” By contrast, “conjecture” for Augustine does not stand opposed to bodily perception; rather it means perceiving another by means of the analogy of bodily animation.

What is the epistemological status of analogical perception? As we have seen, Augustine turns to other minds in the *De trinitate* text to make sense of faith in the God who is not available to our experience in this life, but he also considers other minds in *De civitate Dei* to make sense of the kind of sight of God that will be available in the life to come. In the first, the paradigmatic case is the absent human other, and in the second, the present human other. Now, concerning the present human other, the one we are seeing with our own eyes, as he or she engages the world

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<sup>50</sup> *De trinitate* 13.1.3: “Fidem porro ipsam quam uidet quisque in corde suo esse si credit, uel non esse si non credit, aliter nouimus; non [...] sicut [15] hominem uiuum cuius animam etiamsi non uidemus ex nostra conicimus, et [16] ex motibus corporalibus hominem uiuum sicut uidendo didicimus intuemur etiam cogitando.”

<sup>51</sup> *The Search after Truth*, trans. and ed. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Book III: Part Two, chp. 7, paragraph 5. Matthews points to this text as demonstrating a kinship with Augustine’s account of other minds, but I think this is again mistaken. “Editor’s Introduction,” xxix.

and ourselves, what is the epistemological status of such a perception? Were others to remain absent, we would only believe them to be alive, but Augustine thinks others are in fact made present, so it is not an issue of belief but perception.

In this life, after all, as soon as we become aware of the men among whom we live, *we do not merely believe that they are alive* and displaying vital motions; *we see it*, beyond any doubt, by means of our bodies, though we are not able to see their life without their bodies.<sup>52</sup>

As he wrote earlier in *De civitate Dei*:

For we can have knowledge of objects which are not remote from our senses, whether these senses be interior or exterior (which is why such objects are called “present”, because we say that they are “before our senses” [*prae sensibus*]: for example, what is present to the eyes is “before the eyes”). As to objects remote from our senses, however, because we cannot know such things by the testimony of our own senses, we require the testimony of others in respect of them, and we rely upon those from whose senses we do not believe the objects in question to be, or to have been, remote.<sup>53</sup>

We know that others, perceived by our senses, are genuinely present. This is an issue of knowledge, not just belief, because we rely on our own senses and not the testimony of anyone else.

Again, in *De trinitate*, Augustine contrasts the case of perceiving and knowing someone on the one hand with hearing about someone on the other. In the first, there is knowledge, and in the second belief. Let me return to an earlier passage from a different angle:

[11] Therefore, we know the soul [*animus*] of anyone else by knowing our own, and [12] from our own we believe in the soul [*animus*] that we do not know. [13] For we not only

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<sup>52</sup> *De civitate Dei* 22.29, emphasis mine: “Sed sicut homines, inter quos uiuentes motusque uitales exerentes uiuimus, mox ut aspiciamus, *non credimus uiuere, sed uidemus*, cum eorum uitam sine corporibus uidere nequeamus, quam tamen in eis per corpora remota omni ambiguitate conspiciamus.”

<sup>53</sup> *De civitate Dei* 11.3: “Nam si ea sciri possunt testibus nobis, quae remota non sunt a sensibus nostris siue interioribus siue etiam exterioribus (unde et praesentia nuncupantur, quod ita ea dicimus esse prae sensibus, sicut prae oculis quae praesto sunt oculis): profecto ea, quae remota sunt a sensibus nostris, quoniam nostro testimonio scire non possumus, de his alios testes requirimus eisque credimus, a quorum sensibus remota esse uel fuisse non credimus.”

perceive a soul [*animus*], [14] but we can also know what a soul is by considering our own, for we have a soul [*animus*].<sup>54</sup>

Matthews takes [12] as the conclusion to his account of our awareness of other present minds, but it is in fact the conclusion to his account of our awareness of other absent minds.<sup>55</sup> He fails to distinguish the two cases at work in the context, which I noted at the outset. Augustine clearly separates our awareness of people we are presently perceiving from our awareness of those we have never met. Both cases involve an analogy of self and other, but the former occasions knowledge, and the latter belief. How can we love the apostle we never met? We can do so in part by putting even more weight on the analogy of self and other at work in perceiving others. Here we believe in another mind through the testimony of others and on analogy with ourselves. The conclusion to his account of our awareness of other minds reaffirms the role of perception supported by an analogy of self and other. Augustine does hold we are most certain of ourselves, but he maintains we do in fact perceive and thereby come to know another soul; just what the person is thinking or willing, however, is a matter of belief.<sup>56</sup>

Descartes rarely discusses the problem of other minds, but two of his theoretical commitments put Augustine's account out of his reach. Descartes not only distinguishes but separates sight and understanding, and he reduces animate movement to mechanical motion.

Both commitments inform the following passage from *Meditation II*:

But then if I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I just happen to have done, I normally say that I see the men themselves, just as I say that I see the wax. Yet do I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automatons? I *judge* that they are men. And so something which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped solely by the faculty of judgment which is in my mind.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *De trinitate* 8.6.9, translation modified: “[11] Animum igitur cuiuslibet ex nostro nouimus, et [12] ex nostro credimus quem non nouimus. [13] Non enim tantum sentimus animum, [14] sed etiam scire possumus quid sit animus consideratione nostri; habemus enim animum.”

<sup>55</sup> *Thought's Ego*, 122–3.

<sup>56</sup> *De trinitate* 10.9.12.

<sup>57</sup> *Meditations*, 21.

The other mind is unavailable to perception, because Descartes reduces animate movement to mechanical motion. Bodies and their machinations do not entail animating principles. To see a squirrel avoid a cat and pursue an acorn is not to see its affective soul power on display; rather, such movement can be regarded simply in terms of mechanical inputs triggering particular outputs.<sup>58</sup> On his view, animals are not alive; they are not animate; there is no *anima* or soul at work in them. Of course, he makes an exception for the human being, which is not only a lifeless machine, but also a mind with felt awareness. The question of other human minds becomes something like the following: What sort of justification can I give for attributing a rich mental life to a given human-looking though necessarily lifeless mechanical body? In reply, he formulates the language test: “Speech ... alone shows the thought hidden in the body.”<sup>59</sup> It is the Cartesian denial of animal life, including the life of our own human bodies, that makes the problem of other minds so vexing. By contrast, Augustine distinguishes but does not separate sight and understanding. Accordingly, he thinks we really do perceive other animate minds, motivated analogically by our sure awareness of being an animate mind. He agrees with Descartes that mind is an immaterial substance, immediately known, but he includes life and animation among its immediately known acts. The body, accordingly, is animated by the soul. Another animated body, then, makes present another animating soul. In the case of animals, these are animal souls; in the case of humans, these are rational souls responsible for animating the human, animal body. Augustine’s view looks nothing like the Cartesian picture of ghosts haunting machines.

Descartes does not seem to be particularly bothered by the problem of other minds. Might it not be argued that I simply fail to engage his philosophy by putting him in opposition to

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<sup>58</sup> “Letter to More, 5 February 1649,” *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. III, 365.

<sup>59</sup> “Letter to More, 15 April 1649,” *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. III, 374.



Augustine's acute awareness of the problem? Moreover, might there be in Descartes himself an acknowledgment that other minds do in fact appear to others? As to the first, I agree with Avramides that even though Descartes does not quite cope with the problem it is precisely his philosophical principles which make the problem so vexing to his philosophical posterity.<sup>60</sup> In my view, the problem of other minds becomes insoluble because animation and manifestation becomes eclipsed by mechanism. Without animate movement's natural bridge of self and other, reason must contrive an artifice for yoking together bodies and souls, outsides and insides. That Descartes himself seems unaware of the full force of the problem does not change the fact that there is no other way to construe the issue given his basic philosophical principles. But this brings me to the second question. Manning has recently argued that Descartes does in fact allow that we see that another human body has a mind.<sup>61</sup> For support, he quotes from a letter Descartes wrote to More: "Infants are in a different case from animals: I should not judge that infants were endowed with minds *unless I saw that they were of the same nature* as adults; but animals never develop to a point where any certain sign of thought can be detected in them."<sup>62</sup> Manning connects this appeal to nature with what Descartes terms, "complexion," in *Meditation VI*, and interprets this to mean the particular material arrangement of the human body. According to this reading, Descartes thinks that, whenever we see something that looks like a human body, we are justified in thinking that there is a human mind present. Manning even suggests that this position makes him close to Augustine and Aristotle.<sup>63</sup> What Manning misses here is that both Augustine and Aristotle are focused on animate movement, not just static shape, and that what Augustine

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<sup>60</sup> *Other Minds*, 21.

<sup>61</sup> "Descartes, Other Minds and Impossible Human Bodies," *Philosophers' Imprint* 12 (2012): 1–24.

<sup>62</sup> "Letter to More, 15 April 1649," 374. Emphasis added. Quoted by Manning, "Descartes," 15.

<sup>63</sup> Citing Matthews, Manning says, "Both Augustine and Descartes ... infer that other members of our biological species must have minds too, just like we do." "Descartes, Other Minds and Impossible Human Bodies," 18. In the conclusion, he writes, "Both Descartes and the Aristotelians take the human body to implicate the existence of the human soul." "Descartes," 20.

and Aristotle see in the movement is the manifestation of mind, not just an indicator of its existence. Descartes lacks a conception of animate form and action, and this appeal to the look of the body hardly serves to justify the move he would wish to make. The mannequin or the corpse, even though it may look like a human body and may even have the same material arrangement as a human body, does not manifest mind, because it lacks animate movement.<sup>64</sup>

To bring out the novelty of Augustine's account, I would like to contrast it with Bertrand Russell's influential inferentialist position. Russell thinks we are aware of self, our behavior, and the behavior of potential others, but we have no way of observing whether another is actually present. So, on the basis of our own experience of having experiences and causing behaviors we see another body in motion and infer that there's someone else there: "I now observe an act of the kind B in a body not my own, and I am having no thought or feeling of the kind A. But I still believe, on the basis of self-observation, that only A can cause B; I therefore infer that there was an A which caused B, though it was not an A that I could observe."<sup>65</sup> Augustine, however, insists that we do in fact observe another: "In this life, after all, as soon as we become aware of the men among whom we live, we do not merely believe that they are alive and displaying vital motions; we see it, beyond any doubt, by means of our bodies, though we are not able to see their life without their bodies."<sup>66</sup> The perception of others works via the interplay of animate self-awareness and the animation of another being; it is not an inference from something present to something absent. It is an analogical perception, not an analogical inference.

*Analogical perception:* Awareness of oneself as a bodily mover and perception of another moved body enables perception of another bodily mover.

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<sup>64</sup> Descartes criticizes the classical interpretation of death as the absence of animation and instead maintains that it is nothing more than the breaking down of the machine. See *The Passions of the Soul*, § 6.

<sup>65</sup> *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1948), 504.

<sup>66</sup> *De civitate Dei* 22.29: "Sed sicut homines, inter quos uiuentes motusque uitales exerentes uiuimus, mox ut aspiciamus, non credimus uiuere, sed uidemus, cum eorum uitam sine corporibus uidere nequeamus, quam tamen in eis per corpora remota omni ambiguitate conspiciamus."

*Analogical inference:* Awareness of oneself conjoined with one's behavior and perception of other behavior justifies the inference to an unperceived other self.

For Russell, we conjoin thoughts and feelings on the one hand and bodily behavior on the other, a conjunction which is merely probable, because experience is limited to ourselves: "And even if A is the only cause of B in our experience, how can we know that this holds outside our experience? It is not necessary that we should know this with any certainty; it is enough if it is highly probable."<sup>67</sup> Augustine, by contrast, does not have us conjoin self with behavior; in being aware of self we are aware of our animation and movement. Animate mover and animate movement are immediately interconnected. In perceiving another animated body, we perceive another animate mind. He accordingly thinks we really do experience other animate minds.

### III.

*Conclusion.* Augustine, on my view, subscribes to the following non-Cartesian theses:

- (1) The immediate self-awareness of mind includes awareness of life, that is, of animating a body.
- (2) Each of us is an animated body; seeing other animated bodies enables us to perceive as present other animating souls or minds.
- (3) Awareness of self and other occurs through the basically animal power of interior sense.

He does agree that we get the concept of mind from our own case, but such a concept, intrinsically connected as it is in the case of human beings to animating the body, does not generate an epistemological problem of other minds. Our animated bodies make our animating minds available to others.

In *Other Minds*, Avramides traces the history of the problem of other minds back to Descartes and the adoption of a first-person perspective in philosophy. In her view, the

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<sup>67</sup> *Human Knowledge*, 505.

prominent epistemological problem of justifying the ascription of mind to another body is less interesting than what she calls the conceptual problem: How can my own concept of mind, tethered as it is to my own first-person point of view, be applicable for another? To overcome the problem, she recommends we begin with a concept of mind sufficiently general so as to not include any point of view.<sup>68</sup> In her historical review, she notes that Augustine was the first person to pose the epistemological and the conceptual problem of other minds, but she does not take Augustine as her point of departure because it is Descartes and not Augustine that she rightly thinks determines the subsequent trajectory of the problem of other minds.<sup>69</sup> I agree with Avramides about the significance of Descartes and the secondary status of the epistemological question. But I would go further and identify a third question of other minds, the phenomenological question, which again Augustine appears to be the first to pose and answer. I think this question provides the means for answering the conceptual problem while holding on to its intrinsic point-of-view. If we first focus on how other minds are experienced, we are then in a position to account for how mind, known by each of us from our own case by virtue of occupying an animate point of view and origin of action, can apply to another by virtue of their occupying another animate point of view and origin of action. The phenomenological account shows us how the first- and second- person perspectives mirror each other and how this mirroring is inscribed into our animate natures.<sup>70</sup>

Ryle inspired various attempts to exorcise the ghost from the machine, but let me ask a preliminary question of the coroner: whence the Cartesian ghost? Ghosts emerge, so I am told, when someone dies through inauspicious circumstances. Descartes' ghost arose when he extinguished life from the animate body thereby reducing it to a machine. He expressly denies a

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<sup>68</sup> *Other Minds*, 253.

<sup>69</sup> *Other Minds*, 46–50.

<sup>70</sup> Again, I develop this conception in *Ostension*, 131–70.

qualitative difference between a living body, akin to a working machine, and a dead body, akin to a broken machine. Animals are no longer animate, and so they no longer have soul as an animating principle. Humans, too, lack animation and soul; they possess only lifeless mind. The dualistic ghost, then, came to be when Descartes reduced the animate body to a corpse-like machine. Augustine suggests a different strategy for coping with the Cartesian legacy: what we need is not so much an exorcism but a resuscitation, reanimation, or perhaps more accurately, a conceptual resurrection of the flesh. For Augustine, the problem of Descartes' philosophy of mind is not the first-person perspective and immateriality of the soul; it is the elimination of living movement and the consequent mechanism of the body. For there's no problem of perceiving other animate minds if each of us happens to be one.