

Episode Forty - The Mind and Spirit Are Bodily, Composed of Very Fine Atoms

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It's also relevant to discussing how mind and spirit relate to the atoms to recall this from the latter part of book two, in support of the point that things that have sense (the mind? spirit?) arise from things that do not have sense (the combinations of elements and void):

Next then, what is it, that strikes on the very mind, which stirs it and constrains to utter diverse thoughts, that you may not believe that the sensible is begotten of the insensible? We may be sure it is that stones and wood and earth mixed together yet cannot give out vital sense. Herein it will be right to remember this, that **I do not say that sensations are begotten at once from all and every of the things which give birth to sensible things, but that it is of great matter, first of what size are these bodies, which create the sensible, and with what form they are endowed, then what they are in their motions, arrangements and positions.** And none of these things can we perceive in logs and sods; and yet, when they are, as it were, made muddy through the rains, they give birth to little worms, because the bodies of matter stirred by the newcomer from their old arrangements are brought into union in the way in which living things are bound to be begotten. Next, those who think that the sensible could be created out of sensible bodies which in turn were used to owe their sense to others, [these make the seeds of their own sense mortal], when they make them soft. For all sensation is linked to flesh, sinews and veins, which we see are always soft in nature built up of mortal body.

But still let us grant now that these can abide for ever: still doubtless they must either have the sense proper to a part, or be thought to be of a sense like to that of whole living things. **But it must needs be that the parts cannot have sense by themselves;** for all sensation in the limbs depends on us, nor severed from us can the hand nor any part of the body at all keep sensation by itself. It remains that they are made like whole living things. Thus it must needs be that they feel likewise what we feel, so that they may be able to share with us in every place in the vital sensations. How then will they be able to be called the first-beginnings of things and to shun the paths of death, since they are living things, and living things are one and the same with mortal things? Yet grant that they can, still by their meeting and union, they will make nothing besides a crowd and mob of living things, even as, as you may know, men, herds of cattle and wild beasts could not beget anything by coming together with one another. But if by chance they lose their own sense, when inside a body, and receive another, what good was it that that should be assigned to them which is taken away? Then, moreover, as we saw before, inasmuch as we perceive the eggs of birds turn into living chickens, and worms swarm out when mud has seized on the earth owing to immoderate rains, we may know that sensations can be begotten out of that which is not sensation.

But if by chance any one shall say that sensation can in any case arise from not-sensation by change of substance or, as it were, by a kind of birth, by which it is thrust out into being, it will be enough to make clear and prove to him that birth cannot come to be, unless when a union has been formed before, nor is anything changed except after union. First of all, no body at all can have sensation before the nature of the living thing is itself begotten, because, we may be sure, its substance is scattered abroad and is kept in the air, in streams, in earth and things sprung from earth, nor has it come together in appropriate way and combined with one another the vital motions, whereby the all-seeing senses are kindled and see to the safety of each living thing.

Moreover, a heavier blow than its nature can endure, of a sudden fells any living creature, and hastens to stun all the sensations of its body and mind. For the positions of the first-beginnings are broken up and the vital motions are checked deep within, until the substance, after the shock throughout all the limbs, loosens the vital clusters of the soul from the body, scatters it abroad and drives it out through every pore. For what else are we to think that a blow can do when it meets each thing, but shake it to pieces and break it up? It comes to pass too, that when a blow meets us with less force, the vital motions that remain are often wont to win, yea, to win and to allay the vast disturbances of the blow and summon each part back again into its proper path, and to shake to pieces the movement of death that now, as it were, holds sway in the body, and to kindle the sensations almost lost. For by what other means could living things gather their wits and turn back to life even from the very threshold of death rather than pass on, whither their race is already almost run, and pass away?

Moreover, since there is pain when the bodies of matter, disturbed by some force throughout the living flesh and limbs, tremble each in their abode within, and when they settle back into their place, comforting pleasure comes to pass, you may know that the first-beginnings cannot be assailed by any pain, and can find no pleasure in themselves: inasmuch as they are not made of any bodies of first-beginnings, through whose newness of movement they may be in pain or find any enjoyment of life-giving delight. They are bound then not to be endowed with any sensation.

Again, if, in order that all living things may be able to feel, we must after all assign sensation to their first-beginnings, what of those whereof the race of men has its peculiar increment? You must think that they are shaken with quivering mirth and laugh aloud and sprinkle face and cheeks with the dew of their tears. And they have the wit to say much about the mingling of things, and they go on to ask what are their first-beginnings; inasmuch as, being made like to whole mortal men, they too must needs be built of other particles in their turn, and those again of others, so that you may never dare to make a stop: nay, I will press hard on you, so that, whatsoever you say speaks and laughs and thinks, shall be composed of other particles which do these same things. But if we perceive this to be but raving madness, and a man can laugh, though he has not the increment of laughing atoms, and can think and give reasons with learned lore, though he be not made of seeds thoughtful and eloquent, why should those things, which, as we see, have feeling, any the less be able to exist, mingled of seeds which lack sense in every way?