

Medicine and Philosophy around 1200: Alfred of Shareshill and the Discourse on the Animated Body

Example. The **heart** or the **brain** as the principal organ of the animated body:

What role did the apparent scientific controversy between Salenitan physicians and North European natural philosophers play in the appropriation of Greek and Arab knowledge and ideas and in the formation of a new, learned psychological discourse in the Latin West around 1200?

Can the debate surrounding the choice of the principal organ (brain, heart or something in between) of the animated body serve as a paradigmatic case study that would allow us to reconstruct this early controversy between philosophers and physicians?

1. New translations in medicine and philosophy provided new psychological approaches within the field of *physica*:

Galenic tradition according to the *Isagoge Iohanitii* (end of 11th century)

The brain is the seat of the animal power, which is the origin (principium) of sense, motion and rational thinking

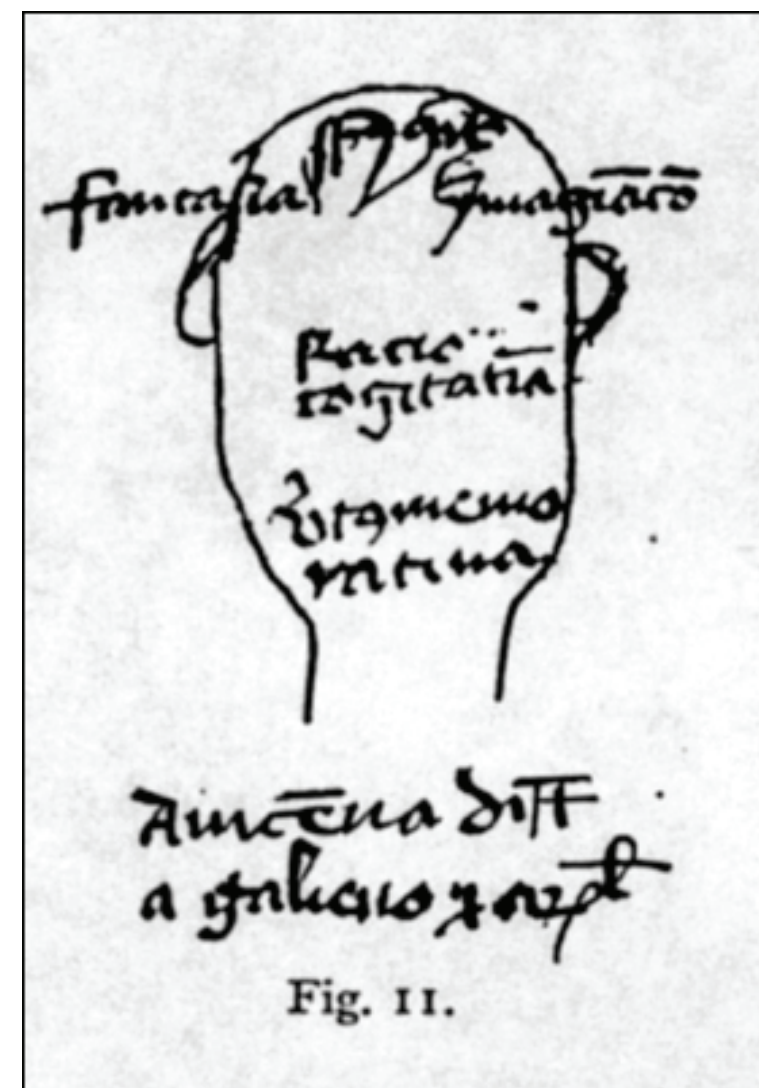
(*Isagoge Iohanitii*, 15, ed. G. Maurach, p. 154)

Wolfenbüttel, HAB, MS codex Augustanus 42, fol. 264v (1444. Sudhoff, 1913): the beginning of *Anatomia Mundini*.

At top: *sensus communis*
Below: *fantasia - ymaginatio, ratio - cogitativa, virtus memorialis*

Written below the head:
Avicenna dissentit a Galieno et Aristotele.

(The illustrator uses the terminology found in the *Isagoge Iohanitii*)



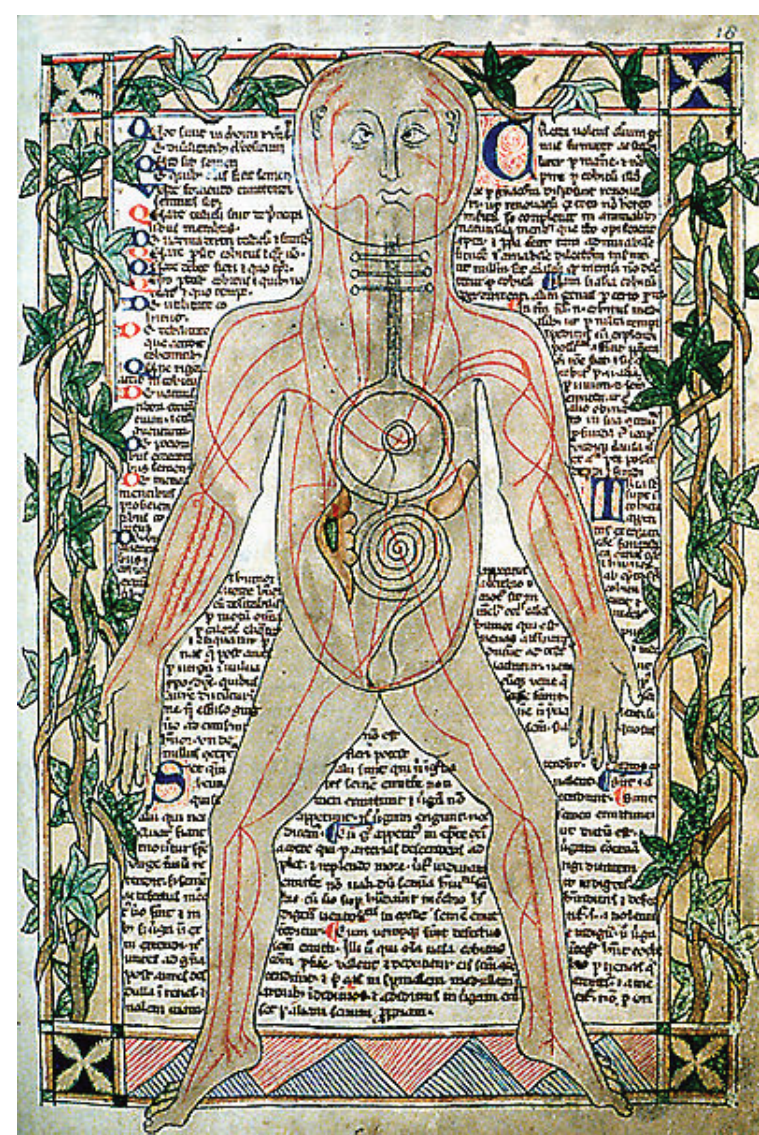
The Galenic doctrine of the three principal organs (brain, heart and liver) according to the *Early Salernitan Demonstrations* (1080-1150)

"The brain is the principal physical organ because it is the origin of the animal power"

(*Demonstratio anatomica corporis animalis* (ca. 1100), Coll. Sal., vol. IV, p. 391)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 399, fol. 18r (England, 13th century).

The "vein-man": one of five anatomical figures from the so called Five-Figure Series. The veins connected the operations of the liver to the heart, which circulated vital spirits throughout the body via the arteries. The oldest Latin version of this Alexandrian teaching aid dates from 1158.



Costa ben Luca's *De differentia spiritus et animae* (trans. ca. 1135-1155)

The brain is the seat of the animal power, which is the origin of sense, motion and rational thinking

(*De differentia spiritus et animae*, ed. Wilcox, B126-B127, B130, pp. 155, 157, 165)

London, British Library, MS Harley 3487, fol. 202r: the beginning of

De differentia spiritus et animae. Described there is how the vital spirit leaves the body through the mouth at the time of death. Here, two naked human beings issue from the mouth of a dead person. In this later interpretation of the text, these could be the natural and the vital spirits, which are responsible for nutriment and vivification of the body.

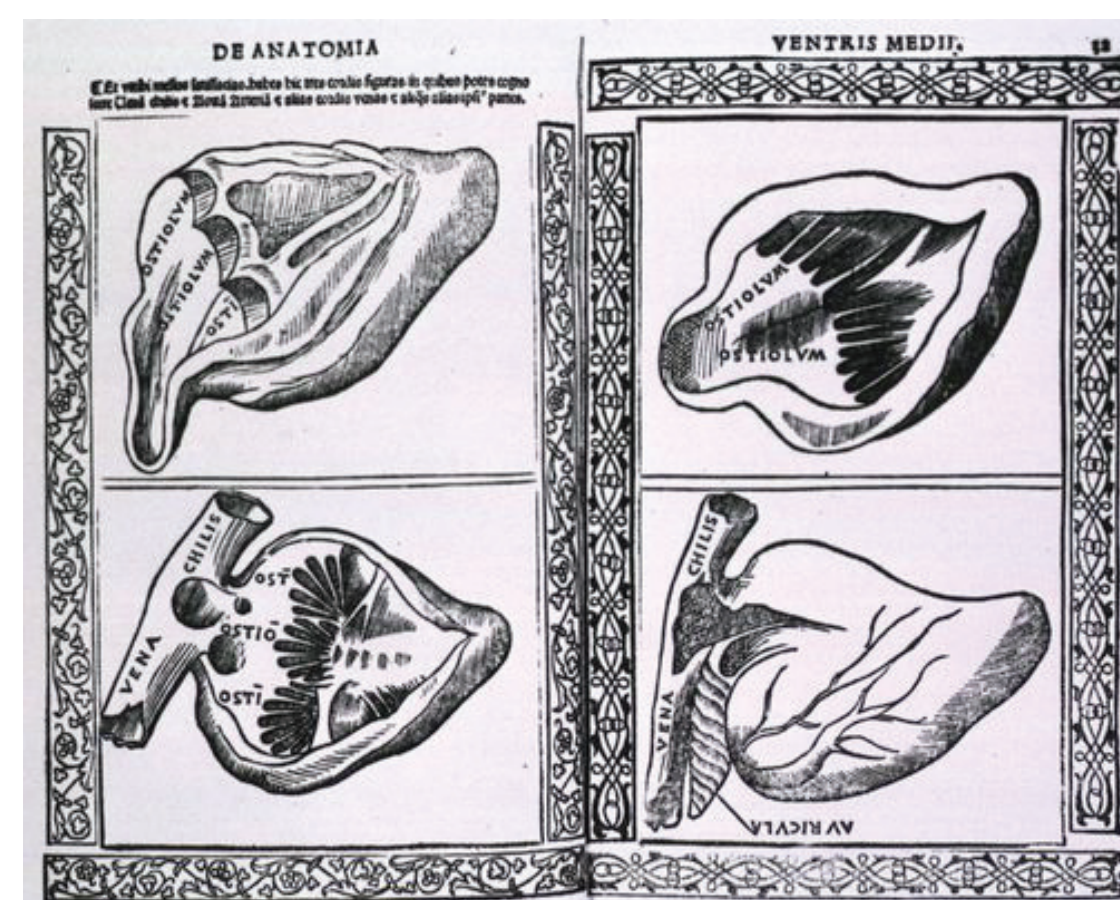


Aristotle's *De anima* and *De somno et vigilia* (trans. first half of the 12th century)

The heart is the principal organ in the body, and it is the origin for all the operations in the body, including sense and motion

(*De somno et vigilia*, II, 456a1-6)

Jacopo Berengario da Carpi, *Isagogae breves* (Bologna, 1523). One of the main subjects of controversy between philosophers and physicians from the second half of the 13th century was the anatomy of the heart, veins and arteries.

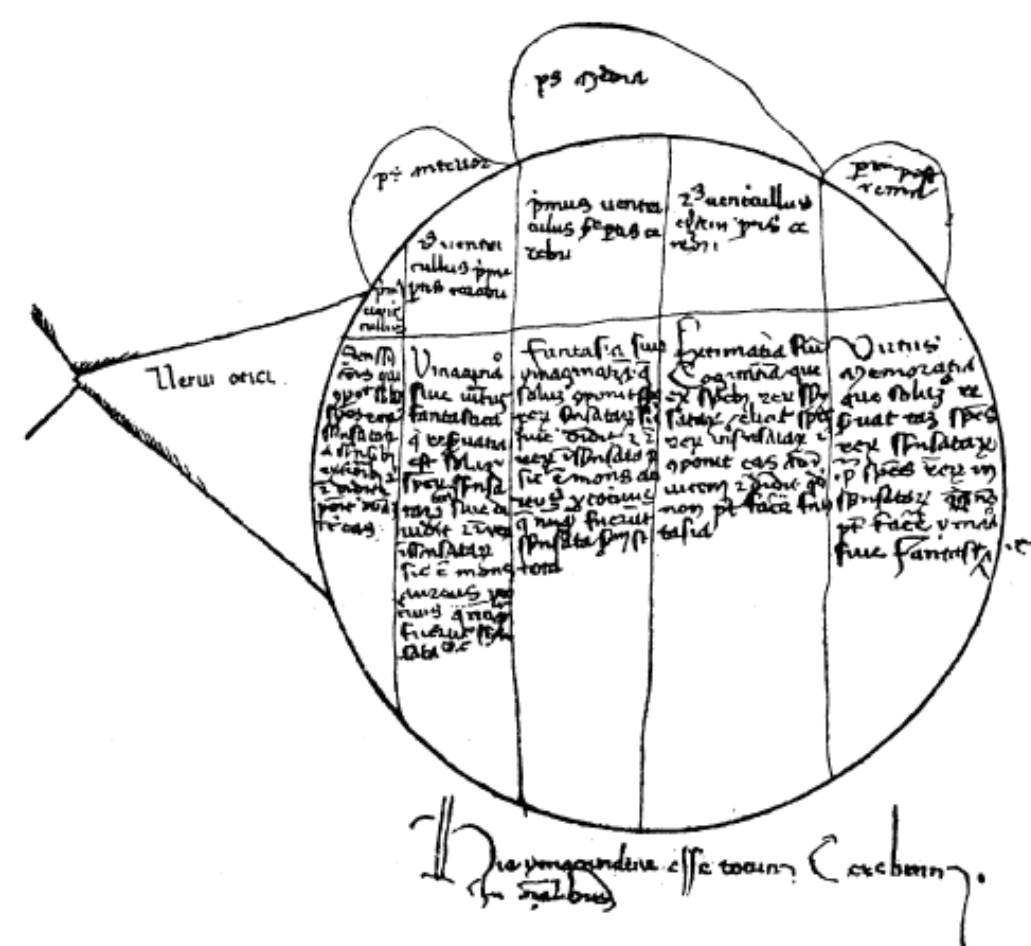


Avicenna's *De anima* (trans. ca. 1150)

The animal and rational powers of the soul operate in the brain. Their origin, however, is in the heart

(*De anima*, II, 3, ed. Van Riet, vol. II, pp. 139-140, 16-22)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Canon. Misc. 366, fol. 1v. The Galenic doctrine of the three cells (containing *fantasia*, *ratio* and *memoria*) is combined here with Avicenna's doctrine of the five internal senses. From left to right these are: (1) *sensus communis*, (2) *ymaginativa sive virtus fantastica*, (3) *fantasia sive imaginativa*, (4) *extimativa sive cogitativa*, (5) *virtus memorativa*. On the left: *nervi olp[er]tici*. Below: *Hic ymaginatur esse totum cerebrum in animalibus.*



2. The beginning of a controversy and its influence on the appropriation of the new medical and philosophical knowledge

Salerno

Maurus of Salerno, *Commentary on the Isagoge* (Paris, BNF, lat. 18499)

fol. 17rb

« Sciendum vero est quod cum animam sit in singulis membris, ut ait Augustinus, nec in maioribus maior, nec in minoribus minor, principaliter tamen dicitur cerebrum inhabitare, propter principales operationes quas in eo exercet (id est ymaginationem, rationem et memoriam) »

"It should be known that even though the soul is in every member, as Augustine tells us, and neither bigger in big members, nor smaller in small members, it is principally said to dwell in the brain, because of the principal operations it exercises within it (id est ymaginationem, rationem et memoriam)"

Hereford & Salerno

The author of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. F. 3. 10, fols. 118r-153r *(Quaestiones Salernitanae)* (ed. Lawn, 1979)

Question B 200,

« Queritur unde accidat cum cerebrum insensibile sit, scilicet ut non sentiat, quare omnes sensus ab eo procedant? »

Solutio: Cerebrum est sedes anime non quia in aliis membris non existat, sed propter digniores operationes quas anima exercet. In cerebro autem dicitur esse sedes anime, anima enim incorporea res nullo sensu indiget sed alia sensu indiget [...]

"It is asked why does it happen that although the brain is insensible, that is, that it does not sense, why all of the senses proceed from it?"

Solution: the brain is the seat of the soul not because the soul does not exist in other members, but because of the dignified operations that the soul exercises. The seat of the soul is said to be in the brain, because the soul needs no sense for [perceiving] something incorporeal, but other things do need sense [...]"

Brain

Heart

Toledo & England (?)

Alfred of Shareshill (Alfredus Anglicus), *De motu cordis* (ed. Baeumker, 1923)

Cap. 8, art. 6;
Cap. 15, art. 9

« Atqui quatuor motus, quos animae affectus vocant, a corde prorumpere mercenarii morborum curatores non ignorant. Cor igitur animae domicilium est. »

"But even the mercenary curers are not ignorant of the fact that the four motions of the soul burst out of the heart. Therefore the heart is the seat of the soul"

« Constat vero, et ab Aristotele in libro *De anima* demonstratum est, intellectum corporeo instrumento non uti. Is animam rationalem individua societate necessario inhabitat. Huius domicilium cor esse superius ostensum est. Ipsum ergo mediante anima intellectui sacratum erit domicilium »

"It is agreed and demonstrated by Aristotle in the book *De anima* that the intellect does not use a corporeal instrument. It necessarily dwells in the rational soul through an indivisible union. As presented above, the heart is the seat of the soul. Therefore this will be, with the soul's mediation, a sacred seat for the intellect"

Oxford & Paris

John Blund (Johannes Blundus), *De anima*, (ed. Callus & Hunt, Trans. Michael W. Dunne, 1970, 2013)

Cap. 22, art. 307-8

« Qualiter totum corpus habeat vegetationem ab ipsa nisi ipsa distendatur per illud totum? »

Diceret forte aliquis quod hoc est per transmissionem spirituum vitalium [...] Dicimus quod potentia percipiendi est in anima [...] et omnes illas potest intueri inclusa in corpore habens se ad similitudinem centri [...] Non tamen oportet quod anima distendatur per totum corpus »

"In what way can all of the body have growth and flourishing from the soul unless the soul is extended throughout all of the body?"

Perhaps someone might say that this is by means of sending out vital spirits [...]

We state that the potential to perceive is in the soul [...] And it can intuit all of these while enclosed in a body, being constituted in the manner of a center [...] It is not however necessary that the soul is extended throughout all of the body"