

On Affliction and Reading, Weeping and Argument: Chaucer's Lachrymose Troilus in Context

THE STRIKING TITLE OF THE work that is my initial focus in this essay—"On Affliction and Reading" (*De afflictione et lectione*) by the twelfth century monk, Peter of Celle—is not original with its author, but was in fact assigned by Jean Leclercq, who wrote the first (and to my knowledge only) extensive study of the works of Peter of Celle. But it is a fitting title, for the treatise does indeed link corporeal experience with the activity of reading in ways that I think many moderns will find peculiar, even grotesque.¹ The English translator of the work, Hugh Feiss, someone with extensive experience of the corporeal emphasis found so commonly in monastic reflections upon the process of prayer and meditative reading, found the content of this work often a bit over the top. In his introduction to the Cistercian Studies volume of Peter's translated works, Dom Feiss calls attention to a "rather repulsive" comparison that Peter makes in this text, of a monk meditating in his cell to a butcher (*carnifex*) selling meat that is his own flesh. It is a good place to begin to sort out Peter's analysis of what learning to read the hard way, the monastic way, entails:

A room (*cella*) has one of two qualities, depending on the way of life of those who dwell in it. It is a hard place for carnal people, but a pleasant one for spiritual people. It is a prison for the flesh, a paradise for the mind. It is a market where the butcher sells small [literally, pennies' worth] and large amounts of his flesh to God, who comes as a customer. The more of his flesh he sells, the greater grows the sum of money he sets aside. Let them therefore increase their wealth and fill their purse by selling their own blood and flesh, for flesh and blood will not possess the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 15:50)²

Perhaps the oddest feature of this comparison is the paralleling of the work done in the monastic cell with the meat market, of meditative reading ("a paradise for the mind") with selling one's own butchered flesh, and of God with a buyer (and

ABSTRACT This essay explores a fundamental connection among perception, sensation, and rational process in a selection of works within the long monastic tradition known as desert spirituality. Its focus is the embedding of intellectual judgment within bodily experience, expressed as a connection of affliction to reading and weeping to rational argument. Monastic spirituality cultivated intense sensation as an instrument of adequate judgment, and tears as purgative agents, having the potential to clear thought, not just to hinder it. / REPRESENTATIONS 93. Winter 2006 © 2006 The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734-6018, electronic ISSN 1533-855X, pages 00-00. All rights reserved. Direct requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content to the University of California Press at www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm.

thus a consumer) of meat. Sometimes, through ascetic discipline, a monk may sell his flesh in parsimonious amounts, sometimes generously, but the flesh is nonetheless consumed, and by the pure spirit; that is, by God.

One can of course tame these implications to suit a more modern taste, and dutifully note that monastic discipline encouraged an identification through meditation of the monk with the Crucified, so that the basic metaphor used here is grounded in orthodoxy. The idea that the carnal must be turned to the spiritual is also standard teaching. The doctrine of redemption as fleshly payment for Adam's sin is orthodox as well. Still, the scandal of Peter's conceit remains, not only in the vividness of the butcher shop, but also in the description's emphasis specifically on commercial gain. There is a forcefulness, almost an anger, in Peter's metaphor that is not accounted for by traditional doctrine, conjuring as it does a savagely self-tormented figure, cutting the flesh from his body as he piles up an increasing store of lucre. The image is difficult to reconcile with the promise in the previous sentence, that the cell is a "paradise for the mind." Peter's more usual stress, as in the beginning of this work, is on the need for moderation in ascetic discipline.³

Undoubtedly the vivid scandal of the carnal/spirit duality in this image is meant to recall something of the central paradox of Incarnation, with its emphasis upon divinity within human flesh that St. Paul characterized as a scandal among the Jews and foolishness among the Greeks (1 Cor. 1:22–23). Calling the butcher *carnifex*, a word used commonly in the sense of "torturer" but not for "one who sells meat," recalls centrally as well the Crucifixion, and in a particularly horrid manner. The English painter Francis Bacon once revealed to an interviewer, "I've always been very moved by pictures about slaughterhouses and meat, and to me they belong very much to the whole thing of the Crucifixion. . . . Of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses." These remarks were judged "bizarre and disturbing" in a recent review of a book on Bacon's work.⁴ They are. But no more so than Peter of Celle's image of the monk butchering his own flesh to sell piecemeal to God in order to amass the currency of salvation. The scandal in Peter's image is as deliberately bizarre and "sensational" as it is in Bacon's paintings. All five senses are strongly evoked in Peter's words: in the sight and smell of the butchered meat, the pain of lacerated flesh, the image of the Deity as carnivore (for God did exact repayment in flesh on the Cross), the cries of torture and slaughter.⁵

This figure is placed at the very end of Peter's treatise, its final statement. Peter contrasts the monk's solitary inquiry after truth through prayer to the academic inquiry undertaken in cities by crowds of students and masters. He intended his rationally scandalous image as a vigorous rebuke to that particular intellectual scene. For just as Paul, in Corinthians, addressed groups hostile to and dismissive of the "irrationality" of Christianity, so in this treatise Peter of Celle analyzes the fundamental monastic task of knowing self and God through the craft of *lectio divina*, in response to a hostile new milieu (as he saw it) of Aristotelian-based scholastic rational argument. The claim he makes for linking up "affliction" and reading, in

other words, is not only a therapeutic but an epistemological one, having to do with the pursuit of truth. For Peter, reading is an act not so much of soul-therapy as of rational inquiry and making new knowledge. The visceral energy in Peter's metaphor should be considered a necessary part of this investigative activity.

Peter of Celle was part of an extended circle of French and English officials including Thomas Becket, and was notably a good friend of both John and Richard of Salisbury (John dedicated his *Polycraticus* to Peter). From a noble family of Champagne, by 1148 he had become abbot of the northern French monastery of Montier-la-Celle, home to Robert of Molesmes, the founder of Cîteaux. He corresponded extensively—with Peter the Venerable and Hugh of Cluny, with the Cistercians of Clairvaux, with the Carthusians of Mont-Dieu, with Thomas Becket. In 1162 he became abbot of St. Rémi at Reims, and year later was host to John of Salisbury during his French exile, as he was also to John's brother, Richard. Like so many great twelfth-century abbots, he was engaged in the issues of his day, including the intellectual debates. In *De afflictione et lectione*, he clearly joins his voice to that of John of Salisbury in *Metalogicon*, defending the centrality of the trivium from the attacks of that "Cornificius" who would demean it.⁶ Drawing on the traditional monastic contrast of noise and silence, crowds and desert, Peter writes:

To inquire after oneself in God and God in oneself [*se in Deum et Deum in se quaerere*] is indeed the one great question, but it is not insoluble if the search is unending and zealous. Actually, another [inquiry] precedes [it], to seek oneself in oneself [*se in se quaerere*], [which far-reaching inquiry uses the disputation of solitude and is opened up through mastery of the flesh as a *stool for its feet*, while this first inquiry is not yet fully solved]. This inquiry is rarely undertaken by academics in the schools of cities and towns. Since it is hardly ever urged there, it is even more rarely completed. I would not [banish their method entirely from our cloisters] but they [pay] less [attention to] this one question, when they are involved in as many unnecessary as necessary questions, and a crowd of people forcefully urges superficial and jabbering disputants to solve questions which have been raised. By contrast, our solitary inquiry goes better in silence and is more perfectly studied in solitude. It is a matter of the heart, not the lips.⁷

Setting his program of reading in direct opposition to the *viva voce* lecture of the university, and his method of textual study—*sacra pagina*—directly against the emergent method of academic commentary and debate, Peter makes a very considerable claim in this passage. He speaks in the vocabulary of logic, of a *quaestio praelibata* that can be *soluta* or not, and of *solitudinis disputatio*, borrowing the very language of the schools in order to claim the superiority for rational inquiry of the disciplines of *sacra pagina*: silence, meditation, and prayer. The main story of this intellectual struggle in the mid-twelfth century between the rival claims of university and monastery to be the proper matrix of knowledge is well known.⁸ But it should be stressed that it was a struggle over the nature of inquisitive procedure and not a simple face-off between faith and reason (as it is still often characterized) or (worse anachronism) some prototype of that between religion and science. At

stake at this point in time was not the object of knowledge *per se*, for Peter makes that clear in the passage I just quoted: both monastery and university are engaged in the same quest, of finding God in self and self in God. It is rather the method and process of the investigation itself that is Peter's concern. And striking in Peter's analysis is his stress on the essential carnality of the monastic method: *carnis edomatio reserata*, a reading method made accessible through the taming and training of the flesh. In contrast, Peter characterizes the new university academy, not as overly rational, but as woolly minded, too theoretical and insufficiently concerned with the real questions, an ivory tower removed from substantive life.

Reading begins in the human body. This principle is fundamental. The procedure starts with *affliction*, the first stage of a threefold method of study. It prepares the succeeding stages: reading scripture ("on which the soul grazes," *pascitur*, like a ruminant animal), and then composing prayer of compunction and desire ("which raises the spirit to God," the object of knowledge). Other spiritual writers termed these two stages *meditatio* and *contemplatio*.⁹ But the stages for such intellectual activities are grounded in exercises for the body.

By "affliction," Peter means ascetic discipline—as he says "to mount a campaign against one's wantonness, not one's nature."¹⁰ *Afflictio* takes the form of examination of conscience, together with oral confession, flooding tears, mortification, kneeling in continuous silence, psalmody, and lashing.¹¹ Those familiar with the early monastic disciplines of prayer will recognize them; they go back to the earliest monks, St. Pachomius, Basil the Great, and the desert fathers. Indeed an entire theology had built up around them, the subject of studies by Irénée Hausherr, Paul Rabbow, Pierre Hadot, Benedicta Ward, and Elizabeth Clark, among many others.¹²

I want to consider here a small aspect of this huge subject, namely, what was the relationship thought to be between these exercises of the soul and the activity of reading. Peter of Celle refers to them as matters "to be paid attention to in a methodical manner," like the "method" claimed by university disputation. The afflictions of spiritual exercise are designed to tune up and tune in the reader, rather in the manner of a fine instrument. By "attending" one also became "intent" ("attentive") and "intended," directed and stretched, hammered into shape, as it were, by vigorous blows (the root meaning of Latin *afflictio*). The prereading exercises are designed both to require "attention" and to "intend" someone toward their reading.

Intention is a complex concept in medieval aesthetic experience.¹³ Since all memories—that is all things learned and experienced—are types of physical affect or passion, resulting from some change or movement in the body (including the change resulting from any sensory perception), every memory consists of two aspects, a "likeness" (*similitudo*) and an "intent" (*intentio*), a particular perspective or resonance. This is basic Aristotelian and also Stoic analysis: one finds similar teach-

ing in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*. Thus there is no such thing as truly disinterested reading or learning, since only what is remembered can be said to have been learned, all learned matters have some "intention" built into the way they are perceived and recollected.

Unlike "likeness," to which various categories of true and false can meaningfully be applied, intention is a matter of perception and point of view. Because of this, it is malleable and pliant, and "arbitrary" in the root sense of that word. In the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero sometimes used the word *intentio* almost as English uses the word "resonance." Indeed the root meaning of *intendo* is "tighten, make tense" as tightening the voice or the strings of an instrument makes it resonate in the first place and also causes different resonances as the tension changes. Speaking of the Peripatetic Greek philosopher, Aristoxenus of Tarentum, Cicero says in his favor that he was "a teacher of music [*musicus*] as well as philosophy, who held the soul to be a sort of tuning of the body [*corporis intentionem quandam*], analogous to that which is called harmony in epic and lyric poetry; answering to the nature and confirmation of the whole body, vibrations of different kinds are produced just as sounds are in declamation and song [*tanquam in cantu sonos*]."14 In *De oratore* Cicero describes how every human emotion has its own expression, sound, and gesture, and "the whole frame of a man, and his whole countenance, and the variations of his voice, resonate like strings in a musical instrument, just as they are moved by the affections of the mind. For the tones of the voice, like [strings], are so tightened [*intentae*] as to be responsive to every touch."15 The original Greek word used by Aristoxenus was *tónos*, which Cicero translated with Latin *intentio*. They may or may not be related in fact, the important matter in this context is that Cicero evidently thought they were. *Intention* is thus a matter of *tone*, of tension, and of resonance.¹⁶ The concept is apparent as well in one of the standard definitions of *acedia* (sloth) in desert writings, for *acedia* is *átonia psuchés*, a negative, destructively unnatural state in a soul that has lost its creative tone.¹⁷

With this background, I want to call attention to one exercise in particular that Peter of Celle counsels among the ways or modes (*modi*) of affliction—namely, what he calls *silentii tenor*, "keeping silence." *Tenor* is from the Latin verb *teneo*, "to hold."¹⁸ *Tenor* is also a concept in late antique rhetoric, referring to the overall movement or course "held to" in a work, as it still is in the English phrase—"the tenor of a speech." As such, *tenor* is subject to various colorations (*colores*) and permutations (*modi*), both *color* and *modus* being terms used by some late antique rhetoricians for the stylistic variations by means of tropes and figures, measures and tones, that one encounters in any competent work.¹⁹ So when Peter of Celle says that the exercise modes (*modi*) of "bodily affliction" include *tenor silentii* he is referring to an underlying attitude, an intention—physical and mental—of a reader preparing to experience a work, an attitude of strain, of tension and anxiety. For *lectio divina*, this attitude is colored by two emotions in particular: grief and fear, the elements of

compunction. Peter's references to "flooding tears" and "mortification" indicate this, and the process is well known from many monastic writings from earliest times.²⁰

The careful self-preparation for meditation is like that of a master artist about to make a new work as he readies himself in his cell (a pun, referring to the "little rooms" both in monastic architecture and in the brain). The experience of reading itself is, as Peter describes it, intensely emotional:

[T]ravel by your reading all the way to paradise and sigh over what was lost [*suspira perditum*]. . . . Drink from the four rivers. . . . Beware the serpent's suggestion. . . . Walk with God as Enoch did. . . . Enter the Ark at the time of the flood when God is angry with you, stay hopeful in the shadow of God's wings. . . . In this manner [*modus*, again] run through the contents of [Genesis] with a deliberate but light step . . . interpreting the difficult and obscure, retaining and remembering those matters which are clear. . . . Then come to Exodus and be saddened by the entry into Egypt.²¹

There is a good deal more of this in Peter's treatise. In fact the discipline of reading is particularly marked by the deliberate self-invocation of often contradictory feelings. This is essential to reading's wholesomeness and intellectual power. Peter writes:

According to the inclinations of various feelings [*appetitum . . . diuersarum affectionum*] one should read now things old then new, now difficult then plain, now subtle then simple . . . now serious then lighthearted [*iocosa*]. If the soul is encompassed with such harmonious variety, it will shun tedium and acquire its remedy.²²

The variety counseled by Peter is not subtle. Scriptural reading, by his analysis, operates by strong antitheses. And this characteristic, it seems to me, reveals a fundamental aesthetic principle for this meditative reading. It is based upon the philosophical concept of *harmonia*, the resonant tension of humors in the body, a variety of qualities concurring (from *concurso*, "run together") without losing their distinctive attributes.²³ Like many writers on the subject before him, going well back in antiquity, Peter invokes a medical model to explain the effects of reading. Thus one should "search in reading's garden [*in horto lectionis*] for effective herbs," medicines against the poisons of temptation.²⁴ A bit later on he speaks of the meditating monk as "concocting the best [of herbal cordials]" in his cell.²⁵

I have claimed, though, that Peter's goal is not to defend reading as therapy. And we misunderstand the medical metaphor if we think of it solely therapeutically, for the "medicine" of reading does more than heal: it brings knowledge of self and of God, as Peter says. *Lectio divina* is conceived to be a rational activity. In this rational activity, both passions (*passiones, pathé*) and desires (*appetita*) are essential components. Monastic practice has been so often characterized as "irrational," since it involves emotion. But the addition of emotion to rational activity does not make it therefore irrational. It makes it aesthetic, fully rational but as human reason was understood to be bound within sensory experience.²⁶ Reading and meditation for

Peter of Celle are importantly matters of “sense,” as in the Old French word *sens*, requiring both feeling and understanding. Among the monks, aesthetic experience is conceived to be an essential cognitive experience, a necessary aspect of the process of human understanding.

This aesthetic method of reading, particularly as it calls for antithetical swings of contradictory experiences, was rooted in the notion of the natural “qualities” (hot, cold, wet, dry) and the ways they harmonize one another’s effects. The medical practice derived from this theory was based upon managing the tension between contraries. The main teachers of the versions that come into the Middle Ages are the Stoics and also, importantly, Galen, who wrote on the passions as well as on many other topics in medicine (and Galen did see the passions as a medical topic).²⁷ It is, I think, a mainly Stoic model of humoral theory that one can perceive in the linkage of bodily affliction with meditation, but its influence on a twelfth-century figure like Peter would not have been direct. Rather it would have come through the meditative *praxis* established in earliest monasticism, specifically that of the injunction that monks must weep without ceasing.

In the writings of the desert fathers much attention is given to the gift of “flooding tears,” Peter’s *lacrymarum effusio*.²⁸ It is of great interest that the effect of such tears is discussed often in terms of a physiology based on medical qualities. The work I will cite is mostly of the fourth and early fifth centuries, the formational period of medieval monastic *praxis*, but the careful attention paid in these writings to the matter of establishing a productive, aesthetically conditioned *intention* toward reading carries through the rest of the Middle Ages, largely in the same terms.

Tears are moist and hot. Rational argument is cold and dry. Tears’ effect upon a barren soul is life-giving. Boredom, indifference, tedium—the cold, dry effects of *acedia*—are remedied by weeping. This physiological, humoral analysis can be found very early: thus St. Iranaeus (second century) considered that one must keep “a heart that is soft and pliable . . . lest being hardened you lose the impressions of [the creator’s] fingers.”²⁹ Two centuries later, Evagrius of Pontus attributes the inability to weep to hardness of soul.³⁰ “Tears are like blood in the wounds of the soul,” says Gregory of Nyssa; hot, moist, and restorative of deadened, scarred flesh.³¹

Laughter and harsh criticism (*parrhêsia*) are condemned by these ascetics because the attitude they can require is hard and cold.³² Both phenomena were considered ambiguous. “Speaking freely”—*parrhêsia*—can be a virtue but it can also be a fault. St. Barsanuphius (d. ca. 540), an important figure in desert monasticism, distinguished two kinds of *parrhêsia*, that from impudence (*anaideiás*) and that from gaiety (*hilarótes*). Laughter is the outer expression of both. But, since the ambiguity of laughter makes it easily misunderstood, Barsanuphius comments, it is best for a monk to avoid it altogether. But, his disciple persists, there is a kind of “proper gaiety” (*prépousa hilarótes*)—what about that? A monk should be master enough of his craft so that he can display a pleasing countenance and pleasant demeanor, all

the while he is groaning inwardly, as a monk should.³³ Spiritual dryness (*acedia*) is the great enemy of monastic discipline, and tears must constantly water the monk's thoughts to prevent it.

The tears can be not only spontaneous but also the result of willed mental exercise. They are necessary for the *intellectual method* of meditation. Evagrius writes of asceticism and meditation together when he discusses the method of prayer: "The goal of the ascetic life is charity; the goal of contemplative knowledge is theology."³⁴ Tears start off the whole procedure: "Pray first for the gift of tears so that by means of sorrow you may soften your native rudeness."³⁵ Ascetic exercises are designed, among other things, to bring tears—compunction and tears. And what of those occasions when tears will not come? St. Nilus, in a letter to the deacon Agapetus, suggests the following exercise:

What must one do who desires tears? Do this: Imagine your soul weeping as it keeps vigil, as you have often seen it weeping in a dream. Weep and shed tears before God in your intention. . . . I know some who did not stop there, but by dint of faith and prayer they changed the rock of their soul into a stream of water . . . they have caused floods of tears to spring up from within, through eyes of stone.³⁶

Evagrius counsels: "At the beginning of prayer, force yourself to tears and compunction, so that your prayer may become fruitful."³⁷ In John Cassian's ninth Conference on prayer the pupil, Germanus, complains to Abba Isaac that he cannot weep at will. He has tried the exercises: "I have spent all my efforts on this. I recall to mind all my mistakes and all my sins, and still I cannot recover the rich abundance of tears. My eyes stay dry, like the hardest stone."³⁸ He is counseled to squeeze any tears out of his dry eyes and hardened heart, for even those can have effect. Notice the humoral adjectives used: dry and hard (cold).

In ascetic writing, tears are not necessarily expressions of sadness, nor indeed of any particular emotion. Sadness, *tristitia*, is one of the eight sins of the desert, along with *acedia*. Tears can accompany any number of different emotional states, including joy—hence the monk can look happy yet inwardly groan, or weep but be inwardly joyful. Tears are produced by the deliberate exercise of compunction, which calls upon different emotions, from fear to grief to joy.³⁹ This is one of the aspects of the exercise of compunction that moderns find most alien. But Gregory of Nyssa, recounting the physiology of tears, is at pains to say that tears are not produced by the heart, the seat of emotion, but rather by a purely physiological process that is independent of the heart itself. A wrenching contraction of the stomach causes the openings of the abdomen to close, thereby compressing the interior organs, particularly the lungs and respiratory tract and the *vas bilis* or bile duct. Moisture is thus pushed out and up and into the head and accumulates in the brain's cavities. Then ducts at the base of the brain drain into the eyes, and, pushed out by the eyelids, the moisture falls as drops of tears.⁴⁰ Gregory was, as Hausherr notes of this passage, a good disciple of late classical medicine.⁴¹ This doctrine continued

to be known in medieval medical teaching; the collections of medical lore, taught in the twelfth century and later at Paris and elsewhere, give similar accounts of the genesis and effect of tears.⁴²

Tears are physiological affects which are not, in this psychology, identified with any specific emotion or inward state. One result of this medical analysis of the phenomenon of tears is to make them ambiguous as symptoms, for one can assume tears for bad as well as good purposes. Like so much else in medieval ethical thought, tears, as bodily affects, can occur both *in bono et in malo*, for good and ill. The debate between Evagrius and Cassian over the efficacy of feigned tears as a means for softening a heart hardened in tedium reflects this fundamental ambiguity. For it is not the tears themselves that are good or ill, but the actions that, like other emetics and purgatives, they may enable. Tears are a “sign” of emotions rather in the way that a successful enema is a “sign” of returning health—as an agent or instrument rather than a symptom or representation—and their product must be carefully examined.

In the twelfth-century treatise on prayer gestures and procedures by Peter the Chanter, available in a translation by Richard Trexler called *The Christian at Prayer*, a posture of prostration is described (identified as the seventh mode in this treatise) in which the individual is bent all the way over, with the knees and feet touching the floor *more camelorum*, “in the manner of camels.”⁴³ The elbows also are on the floor, but not the face, so that the individual puts full weight on the knees and the elbows. This posture was regarded as especially difficult; Peter the Chanter says there is no biblical authority for this position, but that it was a posture practiced by Gregory the Great’s aunt, and on that authority Peter admits it to his treatise. This posture places great strain on the lungs and the stomach, similar to the gut-wrenching that produces tears. The other more common posture of prostration, lying fully prone on the stomach and chest, face down on the pavement, also puts great strain on the stomach and lungs, squeezing them and thus squeezing out even more liquid as tears. Peter emphasizes how these postures are especially productive of tears, quoting Benedict’s comment that effective prayer is when “we know ourselves to be heard not in many words but in purity and compunction and devotion of heart and in an effusion of tears.”⁴⁴ And he further counsels that prostrate postures are to be performed as one enters a church, murmuring ruminatively in meditation and weeping. Cleansed by tears one can then worthily enter the sanctuary.

Galen described the strongest version in antiquity of the idea that the body and mind are inseparable. He held, as Richard Sorabji has written, “a physicalist view not only of the soul’s capacities, but also of the soul itself.”⁴⁵ Galen believed that even rational capacities are based in the physical condition of the body, and that bodily health directly affects mental capacities. “Let [people] come to me to learn what they should eat and what drink. For they will be greatly helped towards ethics and in addition they will progress towards excellence in the capacities of the rational part [of the soul], by improving their intelligence and memory.”⁴⁶

In medieval medical texts, the promise made by Galen that eating and drinking aright can improve rational faculties like intellect and memory is maintained. Herbal lore from Dioscorides' *Materia medica* and other sources taught that various herbs were good for the memory, including lily of the valley, thistle, sage, and especially bugloss—all herbs that are hot and dry, presumably to counteract the effect of the brain (moist and cold) on the memory. But too much hot and dry are also bad: strong wine, garlic, and onions should be avoided (indeed, it is a wonder that Geoffrey Chaucer's Summoner, who consumes all these things, has any mind left at all).⁴⁷ Washing the head and soaking the feet in a bath of honey, camomile, and laurel is recommended by the Catalan physician, Arnaldus de Villanova (d. 1311). In fifteenth-century texts on the art of memory, composed for general audiences, a section on medical remedies for improving and maintaining mnemonic health is often included, even when the memory art is discussed as part of an art of rhetoric, to us an entirely inappropriate context.⁴⁸

Often a close connection is made between the state of the stomach and that of memory. The fifteenth-century Italian physician, Mattheolus of Perugia, says that the first rule for regulating and improving memory is that the body be kept clean of all excesses, to which end the stomach should be purged daily, and if not by nature then artificially, with an emetic.⁴⁹ The common metaphor in monastic meditation, of ruminating on reading and eating the book here finds its literal expression.⁵⁰

The general theory of *harmonia* presented a perennial model for human biology in ancient philosophy: Plato and Aristotle both discuss it, and each sought to criticize and modify it in varying degrees. For example, in the second book of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle included an anatomy of the emotions, discussed in terms of contrasting pairs. It is the task of the orator, persuading the audience through their constant interplay with speech and speaker, to raise and allay these emotions, balancing anger with calm, pity with joy, in the manner of a physician treating a human body. In antiquity genuine persuasion was a reasoned action, and Aristotle and his heirs respected emotion allied to reason because its effects, grounded in the humors of the body, are cognitive, even epistemological in their character.

There is, not surprisingly, a strong prejudice among the early monks against intellectualism, the formal methods of theological and philosophical debate, as being too hard and too cold, distorted by dispassion to the point of *acedia*, a dryness of soul. Clearly, the distrust that Peter of Celle and other monks of his generation felt for the fashionable phenomenon of university disputation is based in this ascetic tradition. Indeed, weeping accompanies the invention of rational argument to a surprising degree among medieval thinkers. For example, St. Anselm of Canterbury describes how he came to compose his *Proslogion*, the work in which he found his proof of the existence of God.

Anselm emphasizes his anxiety and troubled care during the time he was trying to figure out his argument. He felt ill, he could not sleep, he could not concentrate.

“[I]n desperation I was going to give up. . . . I wanted to put the idea entirely out of my mind. . . . [but] then it began to force itself upon me with increasing urgency, however much I refused and resisted it. . . . So one day, when I was tired out with resisting its importunity, that which I had despaired of finding came to me.”⁵¹ *Pro-slogion* begins with an impassioned prayer of longing and grief before it gets down to argument. Similarly, the *Life* of Thomas Aquinas by Bernardo Gui describes how, when stuck on a point of interpretation or argument, Thomas would prostrate himself in tears until the matter became clear to him: “He never set himself to study or argue a point, or lecture or write or dictate without first having recourse inwardly to prayer—but with tears—for the understanding and the words required by the subject.”⁵² These stories presume there is a cognitively efficacious relationship between grief (or fear and anxiety) and rational argument. What disturbed Peter of Celle about university debate was not at all that it was logical and rational, but that it was cold and dry, and in this perception he was truthful to the values of the desert.⁵³ Those crowds of noisy urban scholars in Paris did not weep. They were thus not properly “intent,” and who knows what false learning could result from that?

With this complex psychology and set of intellectual values in mind, we can usefully examine afresh the role of tears and argument in the last books of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, a subject that bears scrutiny in terms of the traditional practices for thinking that I have described. Book 4 starts with Troilus debating within himself (*in se*), after Criseyde has left Troy, after he failed to argue against her exchange for Antenor before the Trojan assembly (the quintessential situation of deliberative rhetoric). He waits until all have left the assembly, and then:

This Troilus, withouten wordes mo,
 Unto his chambre spede hym faste allone,
 But if it were a man of his or two
 The which he bad out faste for to go
 Bycause he wolde slepen, as he seyde,
 And hastily upon his bed hym leyde.
 And as in wynter leves ben biraft,
 Ech after other, til the tree be bare
 So that ther nys but bark and braunche ilaft,
 Lith Troilus, byraft of ech welfare,
 Ibounden in the blake bark of care,
 Disposed wood out of his wit to breyde,
 So sore hym sat the chaungynge of Criseyde. (4.219–31)

Alone in his chamber, Troilus is a type of the hardened, cold thinker, bound in the black bark of despair and crazed with despondency, “lik a dede ymage, pale and wan” (4.235). But *after* his fit of despair and mad rage, Troilus weeps. Notice the order in which these states occur. And then he starts to debate with Fortune:

But after, whan the furie and al the rage,
 Which that his herte twiste and faste threste,
 By lengthe of tyme somewhat gan aswage,
 Upon his bed he leyde hym down to reeste.
 But tho bygonne his teeris more out breeste. . . .
 Than seyde he thus: "Fortune alas the while!
 What have I don? What have I thus agylt?" (4.253–57, 260–61)

Troilus's near-constant weeping is one of his most remarked-upon traits in this poem, always judged negatively. Even John Steadman, one of the character's best friends among the poem's interpreters, links Troilus's weeping to that of the visionary Boethius as a symptom of philosophical disease. He also links it to medical disease, the *hereos* or lovers' malady, cited at Knight's Tale 1374 in reference to Arcite. And, as Steadman further wrote, "[b]oth traditions had stressed the distortion of rational judgment by passion."⁵⁴ Be that as it may—Troilus is not Arcite.

He is more like the troubled Boethius, diseased in his spirit. Indeed the "Boethian" argument he conducts concerning destiny and freedom is prefaced by and conducted amid copious weeping. Pandarus finds him "in a temple . . . al alone, / As he that of his lif no lenger roughte; / But to the pitous goddes everichone / Ful tendrely he preyde and made his mone / . . . For right thus was his argument alway" (4.947–50, 956). There then follows the coherent summary by Troilus of the demonstration in book 5 of *The Consolation of Philosophy* concerning predestination. Clearly this scene is meant to recall also the opening of that famous work, with Pandarus—improbably and inadequately—playing the role of Lady Philosophy.

Pandarus is consistently impatient with Troilus's tears, and we are invited by him to be so too. But the allusion to Boethius in this scene should caution us to withhold this judgment. For when Lady Philosophy shows up at Boethius's bedside, she is shocked and dismayed not by his tears but by his courting of those whores of the theater, the Muses, whom she promptly banishes. Boethius was composing a poem, mulling it over in bed prior to inscribing it with a stylus (for which task he would have to get up). He is weeping not because his moral health is compromised, though it is, but because he is composing a lament. He is dis-eased (*aeger*), and in mental distress. But in monastic tradition (as in Quintilian) one composing is often depicted as being in a state of anxiety and restlessness, even of illness. And this is a good thing, necessary for progress within the way of sacred understanding. Bernard of Clairvaux writes of the place of meditative prayer that it is "a remote and secret place, but not a place of repose. . . . the contemplative who perhaps reaches that place is not allowed to rest and be quiet."⁵⁵

Book 4 of *Troilus* has been characterized as dominated by grief and argument. This is of course right. But I do not agree with the frequent corollary that there are "logical arguments" on the one side opposed to "emotional appeals" on the other. Rather, in *Troilus*, as in a great deal of medieval art, there is a deep connection

between the grief and the argument, indeed, in some way the grief sets the arguing in motion. And to put it even more strongly: in this psychology, arguing needs an emotion like grief in order to come fully into being, to be “invented” and fruitfully “intended” in the first place, or else it remains dry and without fruit. The “disputation of solitude” begins in bodily affliction and cultivates thought within a “harmonious variety” (*varietatis concordia*) of emotions and sensations. Troilus’s arguing is ultimately judged as fruitless—but not because his arguments were conceived in strong grief instead of in dispassionate clarity. Rather, it is when Troilus loses all feeling that his arguments, his life itself, is seen as pointless.

Tears in *Troilus* are ambiguous, *in bono et in malo*, especially in its principle characters. They are intended to occasion argument among readers, not its resolution. Pandarus hardly weeps at all in this poem, and when he does, as he does upon encountering Troilus just after the fatal parliament (4.368–69), his eyes are soon dry again: after all “This town is ful of ladyes al aboute” (4.401). Yet he weeps for the distress of his friend. Criseyde weeps, often and piteously—but her tears occasion little argument, certainly not with Diomedes. Yet her state is perilous, as many readers—and the narrator—often note. Troilus the weeper, distilling tearful arguments like liquor from an alimbeck, traces a path toward spiritual enlightenment, even apotheosis. And we have often been asked to judge his path as righteous and saved, contrasted to the hardened Pandarus (“I hate ywys Cryseyde,” 5.1732) and the lost Criseyde, grieving not for her love but for her reputation.

At his apotheosis, Troilus laughs for the first time in the poem, looking down at the earth below him. By the value criteria of ascetic monasticism, it is laughter that is both cold and dry. The moment is followed by a stanza of harsh criticism (“Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love,” and so on; 5.1828–34). Troilus has achieved a version of the pagan Stoic ideal of *apatheia*, having freed himself from all emotion, an ideal shared in some traditions of Christian asceticism, and one that may lie within Peter of Celle’s repulsive butcher-shop metaphor.⁵⁶ Troilus has passed beyond humanity, and in his apathetic, rational laughter “right at the wo / Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste” (5.1820–21), divinity, in the form of the apotheosized Troilus, can indeed be understood to have entirely consumed human flesh. Moreover, Troilus’s arguments are finally fruitless; they do not produce truth, rational though his final view may be. Troilus is ethically more persuasive, truer to the poem’s intent, in his *treuthe* to Criseyde than in this last dry laughter.

The benefits of coupling affliction with reading can be seen more positively through another character in the poem, the narrator himself. He has been taken to task often for his emotional swings, his interjections on behalf of one character or another, for his pity and excuses for Criseyde even when she manifests her weakness and treachery, his eagerness for the love story and reluctance to tell the rest of the history he himself has chosen to translate, his sentimental opinions, his inconsistent judgments, his banal proverbs. Above all he is chided for his endless tears—even his verses weep:

The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen
That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye
In lovyng, how his aventures fellen
Fro wo to wele and after out of joie,
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.
Thesiphone, thow help me for t'endite
Thise woful vers, that wepen as I write. (1.1–7)

But the narrator's affliction with "flooding tears," his passionate attention to and rueful intention toward the story he tells, is at the end his particular strength, not weakness. His tears allow him to know and to understand what he has read; they create and sustain the tenor of the story. Neither a symptom of lover's malady nor a soul-sickness, they are the means for us all to arrive at understanding the petition for mercy with which the poem ends.

There has long been an uneasy sense among contemporary students of the end of this poem, one of the most commented-upon passages in Chaucer, that our proper moral understanding should rest with Troilus's final rejection of worldly loves. Yet the writings of the desert fathers on the subject of *penthos* and *acedia* may lead us to a different, more nuanced conclusion. Troilus's disembodied laughter is finally too cold, too dispassionate, too pagan and Stoic to be wholly true. By bringing sense back into judgment at the very end, Chaucer's narrator achieves a more complete and more orthodox truth than his hero does, for, in his prayer to the Virgin mother, he acknowledges the (fully orthodox) need for mercy. Peter of Celle himself argued that ascetic discipline must be moderate, for "to afflict oneself without measure is tyranny." Tears are necessary to such moral understanding for they warrant the truth rather than fudging it, and at the very end of Chaucer's poem only the narrator can still produce them.

Notes

I have given several earlier versions of this paper as talks to the Medium Aevum group at the University of Oxford, Wellesley College, Johns Hopkins, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton Universities, the London Old and Middle English and Renaissance Seminar, the University of Cambridge Medieval English Seminar, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. My thanks to the faculty and students in medieval studies at all these institutions for their lively interest and helpful comments, questions, and suggestions. Thanks also to the editorial board of *Representations*, even when I did not take their advice.

1. The Latin text is edited in Jean Leclercq, *La spiritualité de Pierre de Celle* (Paris, 1946), 231–39. It was translated into English by Hugh Feiss in *The Selected Works of Peter of Celle* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1987), 131–41. All quotations in Latin are from Leclercq's text; English quotations are from Feiss's translation, except my changes indicated by square brackets.

2. “Est quidem biformis cella iuxta cellensium mores, dura sed carnalibus, amoena sed spiritualibus. Carcer est carnis, mentis paradus. Macellum est ubi carnifex sui corporis nummatus et dimidiatus de carne sua largas emptori Deo uendit et quo plus de carne uendiderit, eo magis pretium acceptum cumulatus reponit. Augeant igitur lucrum et impleant marsupium de sanguine suo et carne uendita quia *caro et sanguis regnum Dei non possidebunt*” (Leclercq, 238.35–239.4; Feiss, 140). *Macellum* occurs only once in the Vulgate Bible (1 Cor. 10:25), but by late antiquity it was clearly associated with the slaughter of animals, and quickly as well, by extension, with the early martyrs, probably with a nod toward the prophetic text of Is. 53:7, “he is led like a lamb to the slaughter [sicut ovis ad occisionem ducetur].” Isidore of Seville says that *macellum*, which he takes to mean not just a food market but specifically the shambles, is so called because cattle are slaughtered there for subsequent sale (“quod ibi mactentur pecora quae mercantibus venundantur”; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum libri* 15.2.44, ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911).
3. Peter writes “sine modo se affligere tyranni est” (Leclercq, 231.9–10), a sentiment far more typical of him.
4. Cited in a review by Peter de Bolla of Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* in the *London Review of Books*, 23 September 2004, 20.
5. A mural painting from c. 1100 in the church of Sta. Maria Immacolata at Ceri in Lazio (Italy) depicts a butcher in his shop, with a pig roasting on a spit and sausages hanging over head. It is on a wall next to the altar. I am indebted to Professor Herbert Kessler for calling my attention to this painting; see H. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art* (Peterborough, Ont., 2004), 134, 136 (fig. 39). Labels on the figures point to Terence’s *Andria* as an immediate source; the scene is adjacent to the altar where the crucifix would have been, in the lowest range of a set of narrative paintings. It is difficult to perceive any connection between this subject and the shambles in Peter of Celle’s metaphor, but perhaps the Crucifixion provides the link. A general study of the church is Nino M. Zchomelidse, *Santa Maria Immacolata in Ceri* (Rome, 1996).
6. See esp. 1. 2–3, John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. J. B. Hall (Turnhout, 1991). John’s description of “Cornificius” bears similarities to Peter’s vacuous academics.
7. “Grandis quidem ilia una, sed non insolubilis quaestio, si perpetua et studiosa sit requisitio, se in Deum et Deum in se quaerere; praecedit quidem alia quaestio se in se quaerere, qua longa solitudinis disputatione et carnis edomatione reserata utitur tanquam scabello pedum suorum, nondum plene soluta praelibata quaestio. In urbium et castellorum scholis raro haec inter scholasticos uersatur, rarius finitur, cum vix moneatur. Non remoueo hanc prorsus a nostris claustralibus, sed uni huic minus uacant dum se aliis pluribus tam necessariis quam non necessariis implicat et frequentia quidem hominum fortius incitat forinsecos et uaniloquos disputatores propositas soluere quaestiones, sed soliuaga nostra melius silentio mouetur et solitudine absolutius discitur. Cordis enim est, non oris” (Leclercq, 238.13–25; Feiss, 140, with my emendations as shown. The allusion is to Ps. 109:1. My thanks to David Howlett for his most helpful suggestions about the clause “qua longa . . . utitur”).
8. See for instance M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago, 1968); G. Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996); R. Benson and G. Constable, eds., *Renascence and Reformation in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto, 1991); and C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels* (Philadelphia, 1994).
9. See the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, s.vv. *contemplation* and *méditation*. Many medieval writers did not distinguish these two stages lexically, though all recognized the phenomena: these stages mark the fundamental “way” of monastic silent prayer.

10. “Modus uero est persequi in afflictione lasciuiam non naturam” (Leclercq, 231.13; Feiss, 131).
11. Sin may be forgotten “per cordis contritionem et oris confessionem, lacrymarum effusionem, carnis mortificationem, eleemosynarum largitionem, psalmorum decantationem, uerberum castigationem, genuum inflexionem, silentii tenorem, a saecularibus remotioem” (Leclercq, 232.24–27).
12. Irénée Hausherr, *Penthos: The Doctrine of Compunction in the Christian East* (Kalamazoo, Mich. 1982), translated by Anselm Hufstader from *Penthos: La doctrine de componction dans l’Orient Chrétien* (Rome, 1944); Paul Rabbow, *Seelenführung: Methodik Der Exerzitien in Der Antike* (Munich, 1954); Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford, 1995), introduction by Arnold I. Davidson, translated by Michael Chase from *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1987); Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (Princeton, 1992) and *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, 1999); Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert* (Oxford, 1987), *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, forward and translation by B. Ward (Oxford, 1975), and *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, introduction by B. Ward (Oxford, 1980). See also D. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert* (Oxford, 1993); Mark Amsler, “Affective literacy: Gestures of Reading in the Later Middle Ages,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 18 (2001): 83–109 (8 figures); and Niklaus Largier, “Inner Senses—Outer Senses: The Practice of Emotions in Medieval Mysticism,” in C. Stephen Jaeger and Ingrid Kasten, eds., *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter / Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages* (Berlin, 2003), 3–15. An interesting study of the so-called gift of tears in social as well as theological contexts is Piroška Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen Age: un instrument spirituel en quête d’institution* (Paris, 2000). Thanks to Pamela Dolan for this reference.
13. The concept of *intentio* or “spiritual change,” as Myles Burnyeat has discussed it, is different in the medieval Aristotle from that in Cicero, and it derives largely from Arabic commentary upon *De anima*. It refers to the kind of change that occurs when the eye perceives red though it does not actually turn red: red “colors” or “intends” the perceiving eye so that it perceives “red.” In both Cicero and Aristotle, however, *intentio* entails not a measurable “natural” change, but a “spiritual” one. See M. F. Burnyeat, “Aquinas on ‘Spiritual Change’ in Perception,” in Dominik Perler, ed., *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality* (Leiden, 2001), 129–53. Burnyeat writes that such a change, *intentio*, is “not a physiological process underlying perceptual awareness. It is perceptual awareness of something, a mode of cognition” (141). But see as well Richard Sorabji, *Aristotle on Memory* (Providence, R. I., 1972), esp. 9–17, 82–83, which takes a more physicalist view.
14. “Aristoxenus musicus idemque philosophus, ipsius corporis intentionem quandam, velut in cantu et fidibus quae harmonia dicitur, sic ex corporis totius natura et figura varios motus cieri tamquam in cantu sonos”; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 1.10.19; ed. and trans. J. E. King (Cambridge, Mass., 1971). A fruitful discussion of this passage in the context of medieval teaching of music as a liberal art is Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 165–73, where Jaeger rightly relates what Cicero says to Boethius’s concept of *musica humana*, the harmonic resonances of the human body.
15. “Omnis enim motus animi suum quandam a natura habet vultum et sonum et gestum; corpusque totum hominis et eius omnis vultus omnesque voces, ut nervi in fidibus, ita sonant, ut a motu animi quoque sunt pulsae. Nam voces ut chordae sunt intentae, quae ad quemque tactum respondeant”; Cicero, *De oratore*, 3.57.216; ed. A. S. Wilkins (Oxford, 1902), my translation.

16. I discussed Cicero's concept of *intentio* in *The Craft of Thought* (Cambridge, 1998), esp. 1–24.
17. Some Greek redactions of Evagrius's *Eight Thoughts* so define the sin of *acedia*, "sloth." See Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: the Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford, 2003), 83: "acedia is a relaxation of the soul [*átomia psuchés*], and a relaxation of the soul which is not in accord with nature does not resist temptations nobly"; the Greek text is PG 79.1157D. Sinkewicz comments that this state is a "loss of the soul's 'tension'" (72).
18. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *tenor*; cf. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. *τόνος*, "that which strains and tightens a thing."
19. Dr. Christian Leitmeier has suggested to me that the concept of *tenor* as the fundamental movement of a musical work would have been generally familiar from liturgical chant practice. I considered the concept of *ductus* in *Craft of Thought*, 77–81, 116–24, 251–57, 261–69, and more recently in two essays, "Rhetorical *ductus*, or, Moving Through a Composition," in Mark Franko and Annette Richards, eds., *Acting on the Past* (Hanover, N.H., 2000), 99–117, and "Late Antique Rhetoric, Early Monasticism, and the Revival of School Rhetoric," in Carol D. Lanham, ed., *Latin Grammar and Rhetoric: Classical Theory and Medieval Practice* (London, 2002), 239–57. The concepts of *tenor* and *color* figure importantly as well in polyphony; though differently defined they are helpful in analyzing the structure and rhetoric of such music (not only the verbal rhetoric of the words). See especially the essay with many musical examples (most helpful for one like me, not schooled in music) by Margaret Bent, "Words and Music in Machaut's Motet 9," *Early Music* 31 (2003): 363–88.
20. See in particular Augustine *De doctrina christiana* 2.7, discussed in *Craft of Thought*, 66–69, 77–81. See also Mary Carruthers, "Reading with Attitude: Remembering the Book," in Dolores W. Frese and K. O'Brien O'Keefe, eds., *The Book and the Body* (Notre Dame, 1998), 1–33.
21. These quotations are from different parts of Peter's discussion of how to read the Pentateuch: "In hoc quoque libro [Genesis] grandiori passa lectionis ueni ad paradysum et suspira perditum, bibe de quatuor fluminibus.. caue serpentinam suggestion . . . Ambula cum Deo sicut Enoch . . . Intra arcam tempore diluuii cum Deus tibi irascitur, id est *spera in umbra alarum Dei* . . . Ad hunc modum presso et suspenso pedem continentiam huius libri decurre . . . interpretando obscura, plana retinendo et memoriae commendando . . . Ad Exodum dolens pro ingressu Aegypti accede" (Leclercq, 236.24–237.3; Feiss, 137.17–138.18. The allusion is to Ps. 56:2).
22. "Secundum appetitum uero diuersarum affectionum nunc noua, nunc uetera, nunc obscura, nunc aperta, nunc subtilia, nunc simplicia, nunc exempla, nunc mandata, nunc seria, nunc iocosa legenda sunt; ut anima *circumamicta* tam concordia *uarietate* uitet taedium et sumat remedium" (Leclercq, 235.38–236.4; Feiss, 136–37). The allusion is to Ps. 44:15.
23. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York, 2001), distinguishes helpfully between medieval concepts of *hybridity*, which she associates especially with the twelfth century, and those of full *metamorphosis*.
24. "Exquire ergo in horto lectionis ualentes herbas et medicinales contra *immissiones* quae fiunt *per angelos malos*" (Leclercq, 233.33–34; Feiss, 134). The allusion is to Ps. 77:40.
25. "Si electuarium optimum ibi conficeres" (Leclercq, 235.19–20; Feiss, 136 with my emendations as indicated).
26. In this essay, I have used the word *aesthetic* in its pre-Romantic sense, with the meaning it had until the late eighteenth century, of "pertaining to things perceptible by the senses," thus having to do with perception, feeling, and experience. Aristotle's treatise

“peri Aistheseos kai Aistheton” was rendered in Latin as “de Sensu et Sensato,” the name it had in medieval philosophy, and indeed still often does. “Sense” is understood in this older lexicon as it is in Latin *sentio, sentire*, “to feel, to know, to understand through sensory experience,” the verb that gives us in English both “sentence” and “sentient.” It is probably important to keep in mind that, on this pre-Coleridgean, pre-Kantian analysis, “aesthetic” experience is something we share with all other animals, and that it is a basis of our human knowing, as “sense” is the foundation (though not the whole) of “rational understanding.” It is probably also worth recalling that the illegitimate semantic wrenching (as some thought it) of the adjective *aesthetic* from its moorings in Greek philosophy, was a matter of condemnation in parts of the philosophical and psychological community in the 1830s and 1840s, precisely because it deprived philosophy of a word for perception-based knowledge. By the time Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten and Immanuel Kant, and then John Ruskin and Walter Pater had finished with it (roughly the 1870s), *aesthetic* had become identified with a philosophy of idealized Taste (such a thing did not exist in the Middle Ages, though a philosophy of sensory perception certainly did), and with abstracted, generalized ideals of the Beautiful, especially in art. Sir William Hamilton complained in his *Lectures in Metaphysics* (Edinburgh, 1859) that “it is nearly a century since Baumgarten . . . first applied the term Aesthetic to the doctrine which we vaguely and periphrastically denominate the Philosophy of Taste, the theory of the Fine Arts, the Science of the Beautiful. . . . The term Apolaustic [related to pleasure] would have been a more appropriate designation.” Twenty years later, the semantic usurpation having been completed, G. H. Lewes proposed the words, *aesthetics* and *aesthesis* for “an abstract science of Feeling, to stand beside the abstract science of Force—an Aesthetics parallel with Dynamics.” G. H. Lewes made the suggestion in his *The Study of Psychology* (London, 1879), but apart from a dismissive use by John Ruskin (“The term ‘aesthesis’ properly signifies mere sensual perception”) it was not taken up. In Ruskin’s casual use of the adverb “mere” there lies a gulf of understanding between medieval and modern psychology. These observations of the changing meaning of this term are all to be found in the rich account of it in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *aesthetic*; see also s.v. *aesthetics*. A good introduction to later medieval philosophy of mind, including the crucial roles of sensation and feeling in the procedures of reason, is Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London, 1994).

27. The basic theories and themes of medieval medicine are well traced by Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago, 1990). For the most part, it is more correct to speak of “Galenic influence” than of Galen directly, though some of Galen’s actual writings were known as early as the twelfth century. But the sources of medieval medicine are not monolithic, and Pythagorean ideas of resonance and harmony cannot be ascribed to Galen, any more than can all aspects of the ascetics’ “gift of tears.” Late antique medicine was more than a matter just of Galen, as Siraisi points out, central though he was—but as an encyclopedist perhaps more than as a philosopher. In practice, ancient Romans (including the Stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius) were apt to cry readily in public, men as well as women, as productive of purity of heart and intention; see Ramsay MacMullen, “Romans in Tears,” *Classical Philology* 75 (1980): 254–55.
28. Hausherr’s *Penthos* provides a reliable guide to the development of this doctrine and phenomenon in earliest monasticism, for it was for the monks an experience, not just an idea.
29. St. Irenaeus of Lyon *Adversus haereses* 4.64, cited in *ibid.*, 158.
30. Hausherr, *Penthos*, 83.

31. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio funebris de Placilla* (PG 46.880C); cited in *ibid.*, 172.
32. *Ibid.*: “converti etiam convenit laetitiam in lacrymis [for one converted joy comes with tears].”
33. Barsanuphius, *Letters*, 458–59; ed. F. Neyt et al.; vol. 2, part 2 (Paris, 2001). Hausherr, *Penthos*, discusses laughter, which was regarded as a major obstacle to *penthos*, 96–105. St. Basil of Caesaria was tolerant of merriment in his *Long Rule*, but not of “incontinent and immoderate laughter.” Citing *Proverbs* 15:13, he commented, “[i]t is not unbecoming to give evidence of merriment of soul [*hilaritas*] by a cheerful smile”, *Long Rule*, chap. 17; the translation is that of W. K. L. Clarke, *The Ascetic Works of St. Basil*, London, 1925), 180. The bulk of early authority, however, was against even this, though *tristitia*, “sadness,” was one of the eight sinful thoughts that a monk needed to wrestle particularly against: see Evagrius Ponticus *Praktikos* 10, translated by John E. Bamberger, in *The Praktikos: Chapters on Prayer* (Kalamazoo, 1972), 17–18. All subsequent quotations from the *Praktikos* are from this translation. St. Basil and other early writers judged that because laughter was socially ambiguous, it could give offense; therefore a monk did best to avoid it altogether. Aquinas (*ST I–II*, Q 60, art. 5), following Aristotle, *Nicomachian Ethics*, distinguishes among being pleasant and friendly to others (*philia*—a virtue that is not at issue in the desert writings just cited), being sincerely frank with others (*aléthia*, as which *parrhésia* can masquerade), and *eutropelia*, the pleasure of play and games. This last Aquinas says is a sort of moral virtue and as such a good with some relationship to reason, but a playful one, not serious. I am not aware of any discussion of the medical virtues of mirth and gaiety before the sixteenth century.
34. Evagrius Ponticus *Praktikos*, 84.
35. Evagrius Ponticus *Chapters on Prayer* 5, translated in *Praktikos* 56. There are famous desert masters of tears, for example, Abba Arsenius of Scetis in Egypt (d. 449), who was said to have wept so all his life that the tears had made channels in his chest. Arsenius had been tutor to the sons of Theodosius I before he became a monk. He wept as a necessary aspect of his unceasing meditation even during manual labor: *Apophthegmata Patrum* (*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*), “Arsenius” 41; translated by B. Ward, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1984), 18.
36. Nilus *Letters* 3.257 (PG 79.511D–514A); see Hausherr, *Penthos*, 173.
37. Cited by Hausherr, *Penthos*, 83, from W. Frankenberg, ed., *Evagrius Ponticus*, *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse; neue folge, Band XIII*, no. 2 (Berlin, 1912) 560–61.
38. “Nam nonnumquam cupiens ad similem me Iacrimarum compunctionem totis uiribus excitare omnesque errores meos atque peccata ante oculos statuens ubertamen illam fletum reuocare non possum, et ita oculi mei in modum cuiusdam durisimae silicis praedurantur, ut nulla prorsus ex eis umoris gutta destillet.” Isaac replies that tears are not all caused by the same emotions or powers, John Cassian, Conference 9 “On Prayer,” sect. 28 (sections 28–30 deal with tears). My translation, from the edition of E. Pichéry, *Conférences* (Paris, 1955). 39. I discussed some aspects of this procedure in Carruthers, “Reading with Attitude.” Richard Sorabji discusses at length Stoic and other late antique doctrine on this point, including its early Christian adaptations, in *Emotion and Peace of Mind* (Oxford, 2000), *passim* and esp. 343–71. Seneca stated the point clearly in *De ira*: “For with pallor, and falling tears, and irritation from fluid in the private parts, of a deep sigh, and eyes suddenly flashing, or anything like these, if anyone thinks they are a sign of emotion and a manifestation of the mind, he is mistaken and does not understand that these are jolts to the body (*corporis hos esse pulsus*)”; 2.3.2, translated in Sorabji, *Emotion*, 74; and see Sorabji’s full discussion, 66–75.

40. Cited in Hausherr, *Penthos*, 172, from Gregory of Nyssa *De hominis opificio* (“On Users”), PG 44:159–160C. The entire passage in this treatise (beginning at 157D) is of great interest. Gregory denies that tears result from movements of the heart (the seat of emotions, according to Aristotle), though he says we attribute them to the heart because the heart has a certain communication with the rest of the body. But tears result from the violent constriction of stomach and respiration, forcing liquid through the brain. Groans, sighs, and laughter are also products of similar constriction, but they go only to the mouth, not passing through the brain’s membranes and ventricles as tears do. Gregory’s psychology is remarkably somatic. Arguing against those (like Aristotle) who would situate mind specifically in the heart or liver, he says: “Mentem quidem existimare debemus cuilibet membro aequabiliter, ea mistionis ratione que explicare dicendo nequeat, adesse [we should consider mind to be present equally in whichever member, by the same reason of mixture, which he does not address in his commenting]; PG 44.159–160D.
41. The desert fathers were good disciples of late antique philosophy more generally. The many connections between late antique moral philosophy and the teachings of the desert have been recently traced by Sorabji, *Emotion*. A good discussion of literary thought and ethical practice in the late classical philosophical schools is Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire* (Princeton, 1994), and of course also Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*.
42. See Brian Lawn, ed., *The Prose Salernitan Questions* (London, 1979), N 56, 309–10. In addition to “constriction” as one general cause of tears, an alternative cause in this version, and several others published by Lawn, was that bodily humidity could cause the dryness of the brain to melt in tears. There is a persistent uncertainty, at least from Aristotle onward, as to whether the brain is basically dry or wet; a similar ambiguity persists concerning melancholy. Aristotle also says that the young brain is wetter but the older one dries out; neither condition is optimal for making and recalling memories. See Aristotle, *De memoria et reminiscentia*, 450a32, and his further comments in 453a14–453a31, and the commentary on these passages by Thomas Aquinas, translated in Mary Carruthers and Jan Ziolkowski, eds., *The Medieval Craft of Memory* (Philadelphia, 2002), 166–67, 188. The text cited from Lawn’s edition is the longest medieval medical treatment of the matter, in a work called *Questiones Alani* (BnF MS lat. 18081, ff. 210v–227), thought to be at least in part the work of Alain de Lille (d. 1203, at Cîteaux).
43. Richard C. Trexler, ed., *The Christian at Prayer* (Binghamton, N.Y., 1987), 191; see also 35–40.
44. “De utilitate genuflexionum,” Peter the Chanter, lines 2333–34, in Trexler, *Christian at Prayer* 233; Peter understood “genuflexion” to be the prostrate postures for prayer.
45. Sorabji, *Emotion*, 254.
46. Galen, *Quod Animi Mores (That the Capacities of the Mind Follow the Blends in the Body)*, chap. 3; translated by Sorabji, *Emotion*, 260.
47. “Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes, / And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood”; *Canterbury Tales* A. 633–64. All references to Geoffrey Chaucer’s works are to *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. Larry D. Benson et al. (Boston, 1987).
48. See, for example, Jacobus Publicius’s discussion of artificial memory, which circulated both independently and as part of his *Oratoriae artis epitome* (1482), one of the most widely circulated treatises of its kind in the late fifteenth century. A translation of it by Henry Bayerle is in Carruthers and Ziolkowski, *Medieval Craft of Memory*, 226–54.
49. Mattheolus de Perusinus, *De augenda memoriae* (Rome, 1494), 4: “Corpus teneatur mundum a superfluitatibus vnde quotidie ventris beneficium et si non naturale fiat artificii-

- ale [the body should be kept clean of excesses, wherefore {one should award} daily a benefice to the stomach, and if not by nature then induced].” I discussed the medical prescriptions of Mattheolus and others in Many Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge, 1990), 48–51.
50. The common trope of eating the book has scriptural authority both in Ezekiel and in Revelation; also, the exercise of *rumination* was basic to meditative, recollective reading. See Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 44, 165–73; a fundamental discussion is that of J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. C. Misrahi (New York, 1961).
 51. Discussed in Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 194–213.
 52. K. Foster, *Biographical Documents for the Life of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford, 1949), 37.
 53. On this point, see Hausherr, *Penthos* 108–20. It is of course always necessary to remember that early monasticism was a movement that drew the best intellects of its time, both men and women. In their humility, they present themselves as ignorant and childlike, but one should never mistake an expression of virtuous humility for a *curriculum vitae*. On the revival of these values of the early desert in the twelfth century, see Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996).
 54. John Steadman, *Disembodied Laughter: Troilus and the Apotheosis Tradition* (Berkeley, 1972), 110.
 55. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Canticles*, 23.4.11, translated by K. Walsh, (Oxford, 1971).
 56. The ideal of *apatheia* was shared especially by Evagrius, in which he was not followed by later Western monasticism, notably Cassian and Augustine; see Sorabji, *Emotion*, 385–417. Evagrius, however, defines his notion of *apatheia* as synonymous with an attitude of *caritas*: “*Agape* is the progeny of *apatheia*” (*Praktikos* 81). See more generally *Praktikos* 57–90.