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Cognitive Turn

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Inhoudsopgave

- 239 Voorwoord
- 241 Introduction
**The Cognitive Turn and Medieval History
An Exploration of its Potential**
Catrien Santing
- 255 Re-Orienting One's Desires, Emotions and Perceptions
**Reflections on the Cognitive Dimension of Medieval
Monastic Formation**
Micol Long
- 271 Transformerende troost
**De omgang met emotionele banden in
twaalfde-eeuwse monastieke teksten**
Theo B. Lap
- 287 4E Cognition and Methodologies for Medievalists
Victoria Blut
- 303 Creating a Margery-sized Space
**Margery Kempe's Narrative Defences and Offences
(An Academic Thought Experiment)**
Juliana Dresvina
- 317 Epilogue
**The Turn that Never Happened?
Cartesianism and Mind-Body Relationships**
James Kennaway and Rina Knoeff

Micol Long

Re-Orienting One's Desires, Emotions and Perceptions

Reflections on the Cognitive Dimension of Medieval Monastic Formation

Cognitive sciences – that is, the scientific study of the mind and its processes – and the study of medieval monasticism may seem very far from each other. And yet, I hope to show in this brief article that they intersect in more ways than may be expected. In my recently published book *Learning as Shared Practice in Monastic Communities, 1070-1180*, I have argued that in order to understand how informal learning processes took place in medieval monasteries, it is useful to approach learning not as the acquisition of abstract knowledge, but rather as a “situated” phenomenon.¹ Situated learning, according to social anthropologist Jean Lave and artificial intelligence expert Étienne Wenger, is inextricably linked to the context (both physical and social) in which the knowledge was acquired and in which it was meant to be used.² This view is in line with an increasingly influential trend in cognitive sciences, which has called attention to the dynamics of interaction among mind, body, and world, deemed crucial to understand mental states and processes.³

Here I will focus on the psychological, cognitive, and emotional implications of monastic learning. In the first section, I will reflect on the transformative character attributed to monastic formation in the Middle Ages (and beyond) as part of a broader religious conversion and education. Subsequently, I will consider the emotional and affective dimensions of this process on the one hand, and the intellectual and didactical dimension on the other.

Monastic Formation and Personal Restructuring

When the great scholar of medieval monasticism Jean Leclercq (1911-1933) was himself a monastic novice at Clairvaux, he had to pass through the so-called “Chapter of Faults”: he had to accuse himself before the gathered monastic community of some infractions, of which the novitiate ceremonial contained a long list. He found one that fitted him perfectly, and began to recite the following words: “I accuse myself of letting myself fall asleep during the offices”. While doing so, he was seized by a fit of uncontrollable laughter, in which the other novices soon joined. The morning after, he went to the Abbot to offer his apologies. Contrary to his expectation, the Abbot told him that what had happened was a very good sign, because it was commonly said that uncontrollable laughter by a novice was a sign of vocation.⁴

When Leclercq, many years later, was doing research to write a collaborative encyclopedia entry on monastic novitiate, he read studies suggesting that uncontrollable nervous laughter could be the mark of a psychological tension, which accompanied the process of de-structuring and restructuring of one’s identity, something which was (and is) hoped for in entering monastic life.⁵ At the time, Leclercq and his co-authors had relied on Erik Erikson’s influential studies about identity crisis and identity formation, with particular reference to adolescence.⁶ Today, the notion of “identity restructuring” is often used with reference to professional identity restructuring.⁷ The process implied in these studies bears similarities with the one described in the encyclopedia entry on monastic novitiate. It features a first phase of personal de-structuring, in which individuals are required to sever their previous social bonds (including family ones) leading to an “identity crisis”. Unless problems emerge that are not overcome, this should be followed by a phase of restructuring where the individuals forge social bonds in the new environment and emerge from the process as different from before it. A related but different modern notion is that of “cognitive restructuring”, which usually indicates the psychotherapeutic process through which patients learn to identify and dispute undesirable thoughts or manners of thinking (known as “cognitive distortions”). While in this case the goal is to help people to live their lives in what are perceived to be more satisfying and successful ways, similar processes can take place in very different contexts: the notion of “brainwashing” (which is not a scientific term, but enjoys great popularity) is often used to refer to situations perceived as negative, for example in the case of radical ideological or religious movements, which require a profound

change of individual behaviors, attitudes and beliefs.

It could be argued that monastic formation has elements of all of these cases: it is, in a sense, a “professional” (and highly ideological) identity restructuring, as well as a process of cognitive restructuring in which individuals are supposed to not only change their behaviors, but also to reorient their thoughts and manners of thinking in the desired direction, through techniques such as self-monitoring, paying attention to one’s emotion and so on.⁸ The process was certainly an emotional and challenging one, in some cases it must have been downright traumatic, especially for children who were “offered” to the monastery by their parents.⁹ Unsurprisingly, the sources attested that some people struggled to adapt to monastic life, and sought to leave the monastery or at least to transfer to another one shortly after having embraced monastic life.¹⁰

The term “formation”, which is specifically used to refer to the instruction received in a monastic context, deserves particular attention.¹¹ Etymologically, it refers to the act of being formed, shaped, and therefore transformed. An example is provided by the abbot William of Saint-Thierry (1175-1148), who represented himself upon entering monastic life as asking God to teach him and to shape him into the desired form, by taking away the form on which he had been modeling himself in the secular world (“deforma me a forma saeculi cui me conformaveram”) to make him like the citizen of the City of God, lest in their midst he’d be seen as deformed (“conforma me civibus tuis, ne inter eos deformis appaream”).¹²

William used the metaphor of the transformation of a countryman or rustic (*rusticanus*) to a citizen (*civis*) of God’s city, who is to be instructed in the “ordered ways” and in the “courtesies and gracious manners” of God’s court. To refer to monastic formation, other frequently used metaphors are that of a parent giving life to a child, feeding them (sometimes even spiritually “breastfeeding” them) and caring for them until they reach adulthood, a plant or a tree growing thanks to the care of a gardener, and a sick patient treated by a doctor. In all of these cases, an individual undergoes a personal transformation from a previous, immature and/or inferior state to a mature and/or superior one thanks to the help of an educator who plays the role of carer and facilitates a process of personal transformation, rather than simply transmitting a body of knowledge to a passive receptacle. In this sense, the pedagogical model can be considered “organic” rather than “mechanical”.¹³

William stated that upon entering monastic life for the first time, he seemed to “see a new earth and new heavens, of a sudden you [God] make

all things new for me”, echoing the famous passage in the book of Revelation, chapter 21. The Cistercian Odon of Soisson (or of Ourscamp, † 1172), referred to the same biblical passage in a letter in which he congratulated a friend for becoming a monk, declaring that God had made him into a new being, creating in him a new Heaven and a new Earth and making in him all things new.¹⁴ He stressed his friend’s happy change (“laeta translatio, felix alteratio, iocunda mutatio”), which transformed him into a different person (“in idipsum in alterum transformari”). Adam, abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Perseigne between 1188 and 1221, in one of his two letter-treatises on the monastic formation of novices, declared that the word “novice” itself (*novitius*, *novicius*) came from *novus*, “new”, because novices put off their old selves and became new men.¹⁵

Interestingly for the purpose of the present article, in the text mentioned above William of Saint-Thierry refers to a change in experiencing and processing the world: seeing a new earth and new heavens, hearing a new language which he did not know, but was now starting to hear (“linguam quam non novi, quam egrediens de terra Aegyptio audire incipio”); he could not yet understand (*intelligere*) it but wished to comprehend it. The notion of comprehending is crucial in the passage: William also expressed his wish to understand the signs (*notus*) through which God makes his will known to those who are able to discern it (the *intelligentes*).

When approaching medieval perceptions of the cognitive implications of monastic formation, education or religious conversions in general, it is worth keeping in mind the biblical verse “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child (‘ut parvulus sapiebam’), I thought as a child (‘ut parvulus cogitabam’), but, when I became a man, I put away the things of a child” (I Cor. 13).¹⁶ In the Middle Ages it was often used to refer to other transitions or transformations, which involved the passage from an inferior condition to a spiritually superior one, especially in an educational context and/or to discuss religious or monastic conversion. The abbot Loup of Ferrières (805-862) stated in a letter of exhortation written in 843 to king Charles the Bald: “When you were a child, you talked as a child, you understood as a child. But having now reached adulthood, according to the same Apostle, through which the Spirit clearly talked, leave the things of childhood, that is, abandoning all the things which are foolish and vain and seeking the things which are reasonable and beneficial for your present and future Salvation”.¹⁷ Guillaume Peyraut also cited it in his *De Eruditione Principum* and Vincent of Beauvais in his *De Eruditione Filiorum Regalium*.¹⁸

The same idea of leaving behind behaviors connected with childhood can be found in Gregory the Great's account of the religious calling of a young girl, who had a vision of the Virgin Mary asking her if she wanted to enter her service and, at her positive answer, commanded her to no longer act silly in the way of little girls ("ut nil ultra leve puellare ageret), to abstain from laughter and jokes ("a risu et iocis abstineret").¹⁹ After this, the girl completely changed the way she acted, avoiding with great strictness every kind of girlish foolishness. Even if the First Epistle to the Corinthians is not cited, this text attests the idea that religious conversion entails a radical change not only in one's behavior but also in one's emotions, and compares it to the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Lastly, the 13th century *Life of Peter*, a lay brother from the abbey of Villers, contains a passage where the holy man, at a turning point in his spiritual life, declared that he would renounce his own will and his desires to follow those of God. The text quotes the First Epistle to the Corinthians to express this idea of a transformation which affected one's perception of the world, but makes some significant changes: "Indeed when I was a child, I understood as a child, I wanted as a child ('volebam ut parvulus'), I acted as a child ('faciebam ut parvulus'), now that I have grown up, I want to manfully take up the arms of men, I wish to eat solid food, and I propel myself toward the sublime works".²⁰ The author notably chose to refer explicitly to the re-orienting of one's desires and actions. Clearly, religious and monastic conversion required individuals to learn not only to do or not to do specific things (and how), but also not to desire things considered not desirable in their community and to wish for the ones considered appropriate. An example of this is offered by Bernard of Clairvaux's advice to a novice to: "Learn to pray to God, learn to lift up your heart together with your hands; learn to raise begging eyes to heaven".²¹

Re-Orienting Emotions and Affections

It is well known that the regulation of emotions as well as behaviors was a popular monastic ideal.²² Monks and nuns adhered to "emotional communities", according to the fortunate definition of Barbara Rosenwein, and high medieval monastic culture has left us many traces of the ideal of "ordering of one's emotions", inspired by Augustine's anthropology.²³ The monastic reformer Peter Damian (1007–1072), who was first a monk at the newly founded hermitage of Fonte Avellana, and later became a bishop and a

cardinal, argued that living in a cell had the effect of transforming individuals, with particular reference to their emotions:

O cell, a dwelling totally devoted to the spirit, where you make proud men humble, gluttons sober, cruel men kind, angry men mild, and hateful men fervent in fraternal charity. You are the curb of an idle tongue, and you bind lustful joints with the cincture of the brightest chastity. You inspire light-hearted men to again become serious, jesters to give up their buffoonery, and garrulous men to restrain themselves in strictest silence.²⁴

Although emotions are here presented as inextricably linked to behaviors and to vices and virtues, there can be no doubt that a process of re-orienting one's emotion in the desired way is in question here. It is also well known that monks aspired to receive "the gift of tears" and to avoid outbursts of anger.²⁵ A very practical example of the latter can be found in the treatise *De Spirituali Amicitia* composed by the Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167). Aelred – who was known as a gifted educator – recalled how he had taught a friend of his, who was prone to outbursts of anger, to restrain himself so well that Aelred only needed to give him a nod to remind him, and the monk in question would wait until he could have a moment along with Aelred to express what had displeased him.²⁶

Next to emotions, affections were also supposed to be re-oriented: for example, natural love for one's family member should be superseded by a nobler spiritual love when the relative deserved it. The ninth abbot of Cluny Peter "the Venerable" (1092-1156), declared that although his love for his brother Pontius had begun as natural impulse, because of the superior form of love that had developed between them when they were monks together, he now only loved him because of God and in God.²⁷ Likewise, Peter Abelard addressed his former lover and wife Heloise as "my sister once dear to me in the world and now dearest in Christ".²⁸

On the contrary, relatives were supposed to be forsaken if they represented a danger to the monk's soul. Bernard of Clairvaux composed a letter (which may well have been a fictional one) on behalf of the newly recruited monk Elias to his parents, who were objecting to his monastic vocation, and declared: "Now I know for a fact that 'a man's household are his enemies'. In this matter it would be wrong for me to obey you, in this matter you are not my parents, but my enemies".²⁹ The letter dwells upon the implications of the change that Elias had undergone, how it changed his desires:

There is no appetite for carnal pleasures: when spiritual joys have once been tasted; earthly things are not satisfaction to one who expects the joys of heaven; passing things have a mawkish savour for one who thirsts for the delights of eternity.³⁰

This description of the implications of the personal transformation involved in embracing monastic life is very suggestive, almost tangible, thanks to the use of the rhetoric of taste.

Bernard's secretary, Nicholas of Clairvaux (ca 1125-1178), is also an interesting author for a reflection on the perception of monastic and religious transformations. He entered monastic life as a young man in the Benedictine monastery of Montiéramey, where he either studied or perfected his education.³¹ After some years, he sought to transfer to the Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux: it was not easy for him to obtain permission, and only after a flight from his monastery and remarkable struggles, Nicholas saw his wish granted, and began working as one of the secretaries of the abbot Bernard of Clairvaux (who later expelled him from the monastery with accusations of fraud and treachery). In his works, Nicholas presents his "conversions" (from secular world to monastic life and from Benedictine to Cistercian) as implying a radical change which had affective and intellectual implications. In a letter written after he transferred from Montiéramey to Clairvaux and entirely dedicated to the discussion of his new "conversion", he told the addressee:

Here, receive my affection but a different love and in a different way from that in which I used to love, and do not expect here the brilliance of shining eloquence since this is one of the things which I have left behind and forgotten and which often furnished me with insolence and pride.³²

This offers a good example of the idea of the way in which the affective and intellectual implications of religious conversion are inextricably linked, as are the behavioral and the cognitive dimension.

Before and After: The Intellectual and Didactic Dimension

Several medieval authors mentioned that their monastic conversion changed the way in which they perceived texts. One may think of the famous dream recalled by saint Jerome, where he was accused by a heavenly tribunal of not having truly converted to Christianity, because he still loved to read classical authors such as Cicero, implying that he should no longer have appreciated

them. In the twelfth century, the already mentioned Aelred of Rievaulx clearly had this famous text in mind when he declared that as a young layman he used to love Cicero's *De Amicitia*, but that this changed after his conversion:

I began to acquire a taste for the sacred Scriptures and found that the slight knowledge the world had transmitted to me was insipid by comparison. Then I remembered what I had read in Cicero about friendship, but to my surprise it did not taste the same to me. Even at that time, nothing not honeyed with the honey of the sweet name of Jesus, nothing not seasoned with the salt of the sacred Scriptures, wholly won my affection.³³

Aelred reiterated the idea in the following fictional dialogue:

AELED: I have read Tullius Cicero's volume *On Friendship*, where in an engaging style he fully treated everything that seems to relate to friendship and gave a sort of outline of some of its laws and precepts. IVO. His volume is not too unknown to me, since at one time I took the greatest delight in it. But since the day that some drops of sweetness began to flow my way from the honeycombs of holy Scripture, and when the mellifluous name of Christ claimed my affection for itself, whatever I read or hear, however subtly argued, has neither flavor nor light without the salt of heavenly letters and the seasoning of that most sweet name.³⁴

Aelred used sensorial metaphors to illustrate a change in the perception of the world, just as Bernard of Clairvaux had done in Elias' letter to his parents. This is not a coincidence, since the notion of the five senses played a crucial role in the individual experience and processing of outside stimuli. With reference to medieval monastic culture, one only has to think of the hugely influential Benedictine Rule, which opens with the sentence: "Listen, son, to the master's instructions, and lend the ear of your heart; welcome the admonition of the pious father and put it in practice in an efficacious manner" and ends with the observation that "as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love".³⁵ Clearly, in monastic culture it was believed that the way one understood and processed the world radically changed upon successful conversion to monastic life. To shed some light onto this belief, I will now look at a few representations of the perceived difference between the learning which took place inside the monastery and the learning which took place in secular environments.

Monastic Learning: Some Conclusive Remarks

The Benedictine abbot Peter of Celle (c. 1115–1183) wrote a letter to his friend, the scholar John of Salisbury (1120-1180), around 1164, comparing the kind of learning which took place in the cloister and the world of the Parisian (secular) schools:

There [in the monastery] in the book of life you would discern not characters and letters but divinity and truth itself as it is, eye to eye, without the toil of reading, without the tediousness of seeing, without falsehood or error of understanding, without worry about retaining, without fear of forgetting. O blessed school, where Christ instructs our hearts with the word of his virtue, where without study and reading we apprehend how we ought to live happily in eternity. There, no book is bought, no master of scribes is employed. There is no circumvention of disputations, no entanglement of sophistries; there is a clear conclusion of all questions, a complete understanding of universal reasons and proofs. There life confers more than reading.³⁶

The central idea seems to be that in a monastery one could learn more easily, directly, and intuitively. Of course, the aim of this letter should be kept in mind: it is a “letter of vocation”, written to convince the addressee to convert to monastic life.³⁷ In addition, it is important to consider that Peter knew to what extent Paris could be attractive for a scholar like John, and he was therefore trying to warn him of its dangers, while setting forth a safer alternative: the monastery, which he presented as a place of learning, too.

Bernard of Clairvaux, in a vocational letter addressed to the student Thomas of Saint-Omer, declared that only in the monastery one could acquire the most important knowledge – the Christian truth – which was “imparted not by books but by grace: not by the letter but by the Spirit; not by mere book learning but by the practice of the commandments of God” (“*exercitatio in mandatis Domini*”).³⁸ Here again, monastic learning was characterized as something associated with practice, as opposed to bookish learning.

The social environment obviously played a crucial role in this kind of learning, since living in a monastery on a daily basis provided the individual with the possibility of learning through a continuous series of educational interactions with all the members of a monastic community.³⁹ Here I want to focus on one particular aspect that I have not yet explored in depth in other publications, namely the belief that an individual, upon joining a monastery, became able to learn in a different way in comparison to the way in which the same individuals learned or could have learned outside of the monastery, for

example in the schools of the *artes liberales*. As has been mentioned, Aelred recalled that before becoming a monk he had not been able to successfully engage in the study of the Sacred Scripture: “with eyes bleary and accustomed to the carnal gloom, I had not been able to see even their literal meaning”, whereas immediately after his monastic conversion he devoted himself to the study of the sacred writings and began to acquire a taste for them.⁴⁰ The vocabulary of taste, which has already been pointed out above, helps paint a picture of someone immediately and naturally making sense of the world, in this case by discerning the sweetness (that is, the delightful and wholesome nature) of the sacred Scriptures.

The same interpretation could be applied to monastic representations of individuals who miraculously became able to quickly and immediately learn something that would have taken much time and effort in the secular world. The Cistercian Jocelin (1175–1214), in his life of saint Patrick, declared that that thanks to the help of the saint, a boy – the future saint Fiechus – learned the whole Psalter in a day and was quickly able to understand the sacred Scriptures.⁴¹ It seems potentially fruitful to continue to explore the change in the experience and processing of outside *stimuli* in individuals who underwent a radical personal transformation such as monastic or religious conversion, for example by comparing before/after appreciation of sacred texts, religious rituals, and sacred art.⁴²

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Notes

1. Micol Long, *Learning as Shared Practice in Monastic Communities, 1070-1180* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).
2. Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger, *Situated Learning. Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
3. Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede, *A Short Primer on Situated Cognition*, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition*, ed. Philip Robbins, Murat Aydede (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3-10.
4. Jean Leclercq, *Memoirs. From Grace to Grace* (Petersham: Saint Bede's, 2000), 12.
5. This research lead to Jean Leclercq, Andrea Boni and Raymond Hostie, "Noviziato", in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, vol. 6 (Milano: Edizioni Paoline, 1980), 442-460. Raymond Hostie authored the third section of the entry, which focuses on the psychological dimension of novitiate.
6. See Erik Erikson, "The problem of ego identity," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 4 (1956): 56-121.
7. See for example Yaru Chen and Trish Reay, "Responding to imposed job redesign: The evolving dynamics of work and identity in restructuring professional identity", *Human Relations* 74 (2020): 1541-1571; Yiannis Kyratsis, Rifat Atun, Nelson Phillips, Paul Tracey and Gerard George, "Health systems in transition: Professional identity work in the context of shifting institutional logics", *Academy of Management Journal* 60 (2017): 610-641.
8. Parallels have been traced between cognitive restructuring psychotherapy and some form of Christian spiritual counselling, which is a form of religious instruction, see Propst, L. Rebecca, "A Comparison of the Cognitive Restructuring Psychotherapy Paradigm and Several Spiritual Approaches to Mental Health", *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 8 (1980), 107-114.
9. Mayke De Jong, *In Samuel's Image. Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).
10. See Anselm of Canterbury in his famous letter to the novice Lanzo, see Anselmo d'Aosta, *Lettere*, ed. Inos Biffi et al., vol. 1. *Priore e abate del Bec* (Milano: Jaca Book 1988), ep. 37, p. 180.
11. See E. Rozanne Elder, *Formation for Wisdom, Not Education for Knowledge*, in Tanaseanu-Dobler and Dobler, *Religious Education in Pre-Modern Europe*, 186; Jean Leclercq, "La communauté formatrice selon St. Bernard de Clairvaux", *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 42 (1980), 3-21.
12. *Meditativae Orationes, oratio* 4, par. 17: "Doce me, Domine, hominem rusticianum de rare saeculi venientem, civitatis tuae mores disciplinatos, et curiae tuae venustas urbanitates ; deforma me a forma saeculi, cui me conformaveram ; conforma me civibus tuis, ne inter eos deformis appaream", in Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, *Oraisons méditatives*, ed. Jacques Hourlier (Paris: Cerf, 1986) (Sources Chrétiennes, 324), 90.
13. Armand Veilleux, "Le rôle de la sous-culture monastique dans la formation du moine", *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 100 (1978), 734-749.
14. *Lettres d'Odon d'Ourcamp*, in *Analecta Monastica. Textes et études sur la vie des*

- moines au Moyen Âge*, 3 s., ed. Marie-Madeleine Lebreton, Jean Leclercq, and Charles Hugh Talbot (Roma: Herder, 1955) (*Studia Anselmiana* 37), ep. 4, p. 150-151: “Te Dominum novam fecerit creaturam”, “in te creaverit caelum novum et terram novam”, “in te nova facta sint omnia”.
15. Adam de Perseigne, *Lettres*, vol. 1, ed. Jean Bouvet (Paris: Le Cerf, 1960) (*Sources Chrétiennes*, 4), ep. 5 to Osmond of Mortemer, 112, par. 45: “et tu me compellis de novitate vitae philosophari, quomodo scilicet noviter conversi de saeculo in novum hominem valeant reformari” and par 46: “Revera necesse est ut convertentes de saeculo multa diligentia novae vitae splendoribus informantur, ut secundum sui nominis rationem deposito veteri homine, recte novitii nominentur”. On Adam’s perception of monastic formation see Micol Long, “Entre spiritualité monastique et canoniale? Le thème de la formation dans les lettres d’Adam de Perseigne”, in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 60 (2017), 247-270.
16. First Epistle to the Corinthians 13; 11: “cum essem parvulus loquebar ut parvulus sapiebam ut parvulus cogitabam ut parvulus quando factus sum vir evacuavi quae erant parvuli”, which was cited and commented upon by many patristic and medieval authors, including Augustine, Jerome, Cassiodorus, Gregory the Great, Alcuin, Rabanus Maurus, Bruno of Cologne, Lanfranc of Canterbury, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, as shown by a keyword search on databases of texts such as the Library of Latin Texts and the *Patrologia Latina*.
17. Loup de Ferrières, *Correspondance*, ed. Léon Levillain, vol. 1. 829-847 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964), ep. 31, p. 140: “Cum esseti parvuli, loquebamini ut parvuli, sapiebatis ut parvuli. Nunc autem ad virilem perducti aetatem, secundum eundem apostolum, in quo evidenter Dei spiritus loquebatur, evacuate quae fuerunt parvuli, scilicet stulta et quaeque atque inania declinates, rationabilia, praesenti et futurae saluti profutura, sectamini”.
18. Guillelmus Peraldus, *De eruditione principum (opusculum in editionibus quibusdam cum Thomae de Aquino operibus impressum)* liber 5, cap. 47: “Monendi sunt filii nobilium, cum ad virilem aetatem pervenerint, ut puerilibus se evacuent, exemplo apostoli dicentis: cum essem parvulus, loquebar ut parvulus, cogitabam ut parvulus, sapiebam ut parvulus; quando autem factus sum vir, evacuavi quae erant parvuli”, in *Library of Latin Texts - Series A* (Turnhout, Brepols, 2021), available online: www.brepols.net (last accessed 24/2/2022) and Vincent of Beauvais, *De Eruditione Filiorum Nobilium*, cap. 37: “Cum autem per,tatum priorum gradus ad virilem statum accesserint, tunc quidem oportet implere quod dicit apostolus. I. Cor. XIII. Cum essem parvulus loquebar ut parvulus cogitabam ut parvulus, sapiebam ut parvulus, quando autem factus sum vir, evacuavi quae erant parvuli”, in Arpad Steiner, “Guillaume Perrault and Vincent of Beauvais.” *Speculum*, vol. 8 (1933), 51–58: here p. 55.
19. *Dialogus* IV, cap. 18: “ut nil ultra leve puellare ageret, a risu et iocis abstineret [...] quibus visis, in cunctis suis moribus puella mutata est, onmemque a se levitatem puellaris vitae magna gravitatis detersit manu”, in *Opere di Gregorio Magno*, vol. 4. *Dialoghi* (I-IV), ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2000), 362.
20. “Ideoque, benignissime Domine, abrenuncio stare deinceps proprie electioni, meae voluntati initi secundum mea desideria, uestris consolationibus quibus hactenus me

- lactastis uberibus infantie mee delectari, ut sicut meis desideriiis semper satisfacere studuistis, ita uestris beneplacitis ac uoluntati, in uestre caritatis affectuosis desideriiis adimplendis inconfusibiliter deseruire contendo. Dum enim fui paruulus, sapiebam ut paruulus, volebam ut paruulus, faciebam ut paruulus, modo quia adoleui, in virum accingi viriliter cupio, solido cibo vesci desidero, ad sublimia opera me extendo”, in Éric Delaissé, Fabienne Arboitm, “La vie de Pierre, convers de Villers-en-Brabant au XIIIe siècle. Édition critique et traduction”, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 131 (2013), 354.
21. “Disce orare Deum, disce levare cor cum manibus: disce oculos supplices in coelum erigere,” in *Opere di San Bernardo* vol. 6. *Lettere*, ed. Ferruccio Gastaldelli (Milano: Scriptorium Claravallense. Fondazione di Studi Cistercensi, 1986–1987), ep. 333, 348.
 22. See for example the Benedictine Rule, cap. VII: “non sit facilis ac promptus in risu”, in *La regola di san Benedetto e le regole dei Padri*, ed. Salvatore Pricoco (Milano: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1995), 162. See Damien Boquet, Piroska Nagy, *Medieval Sensibilities. A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages*, trans. Robert Shaw (Cambridge: Polity 2018), 40-48.
 23. See Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006) and Boquet, Nagy, *Medieval Sensibilities*, 91-94, which analyses Bernard of Clairvaux and Richard of Saint-Victor’s beautiful pages on the ordering of emotions in theory.
 24. Ep. 28 to the hermit Leo of Sitris: “cella spiritale prorsus habitaculum, quae de superbis humiles, de gulosis sobrios, de crudelibus pios, de iracundis mites, de odiosis reddis in fraterna karitate ferventes. Tu ociosae linguae frenum, tu luxuriosis renibus nitidae castitatis adhibes cingulum. Tu facis, ut leves quique ad gravitatem redeant, ut iocosis scurrilitatibus parcant, ut vaniloqui se sub districta silentii censura constringant”, in Pier Damiani, *Lettere*, vol. 2, ed. Guido Innocenzo Gargano, Nicolangelo D’Acunto (Roma: Città Nuova, 2001), 148. For more examples, see the rest of the letter.
 25. About the gift of tears see Piroska Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen Âge : un instrument spirituel en quête d’institution (5.-13. siècle)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000).
 26. About Aelred (who was novice master before becoming an abbot) ad educator see Marsha L. Dutton, “Aelred of Rievaulx: Abbot, Teacher, and Author” in *A Companion to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–1167)*, ed. Marsha L. Dutton (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 17-47 and Amédée Hallier, *Un éducateur monastique: Aelred de Rievaulx* (Paris: Gabalda, 1959). See: *De Spirituali Amicitia*, liber 3, chap. 37: “ita mihi amicitiae iura conservat, ut commotum aliquando et iamiam prorumpentem in verba, solo nutu cohibeam; et ea quae displicent numquam producat in publicum; sed ad evaporandum suae mentis conceptum, semper expectet secretum”, in *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia. I: Opera Ascetica*, ed. Anselm Hoste and Charles Hugh Talbot (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971) (*Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, 1), 324.
 27. Ep. 16 to Pontius: “Efferbuerat inter nos eo ardore feruor caritatis, ut qui te solo impulsu naturae coeperam diligere, iam non te nossem nisi ex deo et in deo amare”, in *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. Giles Constable, vol. 1 (Cambridge [Mass.]: Harvard University Press, 1967), 23.
 28. “soror in seculo quondam chara, nunc in Christo charissima”, in *The Letter Collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise*, ed. David Luscombe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013),

p. 142.

29. Ep. 11 on behalf of the monk Elias to his parents: “Vere nunc cognosco quia ‘inimici homini domestic eius.’ In hoc vobis oboedire non debeo, in hoc vos non agnosco parentes, sed hostes”, in *Opere di San Bernardo* vol. 6. *Lettere*, 532.
30. “Gustato spiritu, necesse est desipere carnem; affectanti caelestia, terrena non sapiunt; aeternis inhianti, fastidio sunt transitoria”, in *ibid.*
31. On Nicholas, who is less well known than the other authors cited here, see Lena Wahlgren-Smith, “Introduction”, in *The Letter Collections of Nicholas of Clairvaux*, ed. Lena Wahlgren-Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2018), xi-lxxxii; Augustine Steiger, “Nikolaus, Mönch in Clairvaux, Sekretär des hl. Bernhard”, *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und seiner Zweige* 38 (1917): 45–50; John F. Benton, “Nicolas de Clairvaux”, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 9 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1982), 255–259; John Benton, “The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center”, *Speculum* 36 (1961): 555–557; Luanne Meagher, “The Letters of Nicolas of Clairvaux”, in *Heaven on Earth. Studies in Medieval Cistercian History*. Ed. E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1983), 128–142.
32. “accipe affectum meum, sed alium, et aliter quam solebam. Nec attendas hic splendoris eloquentie claritatem, quia hoc est unum eorum que retro oblitus sum, quod michi sepius insolentiam et extollentiam ministravit”, in *The Letter Collections of Nicholas of Clairvaux*, ed. Lena Wahlgren-Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2018), ep. 16, 60.
33. *De Spirituali Amicitia, Prologus*, cap. 7: “tunc enim nihil quod non dulcissimi nominis Iesu fuisset melle mellitum, nihil quod non sacrarum Scripturarum fuisset sale conditum, meum sibi ex toto rapiebat affectum. Et iterum atque iterum ea ipsa revoluens, quaerebam si forte possent Scripturarum auctoritate fulciri”, in *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera omnia. 1: Opera ascetica*, 288.
34. “AELREDUS: Tullii Ciceronis librum de amicitia legeris; ubi copiosissime de omnibus quae ad eam spectare videntur iucundo stilo disseruit; et quasdam, ut ita dicam, leges in ea ac praecepta descripsit. IVO. Non usquequaque ipse mihi ignotus est liber, utpote qui in eo aliquando plurimum delectabar; sed ex quo mihi desanctarum Scripturarum fauis aliquid coepit emanare dulcedinis, et mellifluum Christi nomen sibi meum vendicavit affectum; quidquid sine caelestium litterarum sale, ac dulcissimi illius nominis condimento, quamvis subtiliter disputatu legero vel audiero, nee sapidum mihi potest esse nec lucidum”, in *ibid.*, 290.
35. *Regula Benedicti, Prologus*, c. 1 “Obsculta, o fili, praecepta magistri et inclina aurem cordis tui et admonitionem pii patris libenter excipe et efficaciter comple”, and c. 49: “Processu vero conversationis et fidei dilatato corde inenarrabili dilectionis dulcedine curritur via mandatorum Dei”, in *RB 1980: The Rule of Saint Benedict in English*, transl. Timothy Fry (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1981), pp 137-138 and 169-170.
36. Ep. 170 to John of Salisbury: “Ibi in libro vite non figuras et elementa sec ipsam sicut est divinitatem et veritatem oculo ad oculum certeres, sine labore legendi, sine fastidio videndi, sine fallacia vel errore intelligendi, sine sollicitudine retinendi, sine timore obliviscendi. O beata scola, ubi christus docet corda nostra verbo virtutis sue, ubi sine studio et lectione apprehendimus quomodo debeamus eternaliter beate

- vivere. Non emitur ibi liber, non redimitur magister scriptorum; nulla circumventio disputationum, nulla sophismatum intricatio; plana omnium questionum determinatio, plena universarum rationum et argumentationum apprehensio. Ibi plus vita confert quam lectio, plus prodest simplicitas quam cavillatio”, in *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, ed. Julian P. Haseldine (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2001), 656-657.
37. The classic reference is Jean Leclercq, *Lettres de vocation à la vie monastique*, in *Analecta Monastica* 3 s., 168–197.
 38. Ep. 108 to Thomas of saint-Omer, par. 2: “Sed, quaeso te, quod memoriale virtutis, quae laus disciplinae, quis scientiae profectus, vel artis fructus, trepidare timore ubi non est timor, et timorem Domini relinquere? Quam salubrius disceres Iesum, et hunc crucifixum, quam utique scientiam haud facile, nisi qui mundo crucifixus est, apprehendit. Falleris, fili, falleris, si te putas invenire apud mundi magistros, quam soli Christi discipuli, id est mundi contemptores, Dei munere assequuntur. Nec enim hanc lectio docet, sed unctio; non littera, sed spiritus; non eruditio, sed exercitatio in mandatis Domini”, in *Opere di San Bernardo* vol. 6. *Lettere*, 518.
 39. See Long, *Learning as Shared Practice* and Micol Long, “Monastic Practices of Shared Reading as a Means of Learning”, in *The Annotated Book. Early Medieval Practices of Reading and Writing*, ed. M. Teeuwen and I. van Renswoude (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017) (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, 38), 501-528.
 40. *De Spirituali Amicitia, Prologus*: “cum prius nec ad ipsam earum superficiem oculus lippiens, et carnalibus tenebris assuetus sufficeret”, in *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera omnia. 1: Opera ascetica*, 287.
 41. «Sanctus autem illum benedixit, et alphabetum manu sua scriptum tradidit ei. Ipse vero benedictione sancti Patricii potitus, in una die psalterium didicit, et infra breve temporis spatium inspirante Spiritu sapientiae et intellectus, sacras scripturas sufficienter intellexit», in *De sancto Patricio episcopo apostolo et primate Hiberniae vita auctore Iocelino monacho de Furnesio*, in *Acta Sanctorum Martii*, vol. 2 ed. Godefroy Henschen, Daniel Papebroch (Antverpiae: Apud Iacobum Meursium, 1668), xvii *Martii*, cap. 12, par. 100, coll. 564C–564D.
 42. I will pursue this as part of my research for the project ERC-Starting Grant 2020 SenSArt - The Sensuous Appeal of the Holy. Sensory Agency of Sacred Art and Somatised Spiritual Experiences in Medieval Europe (12th-15th century) at the University of Padua.