incorporate vernacular dialectic forms drawn from the universities and the law, for the theological debates in Mankind and Wisdom, and the debate on faith and reason in the middle of the Coventry Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors, all late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

Much of this is informed speculation, and fully realized plays as we understand them may well have burst forth as a very publically performed vernacularized scripture, continuing from the late fourteenth century to fly in the face of the Constitutions, just as they were later, through popular demand, to resist the pressures of the Protestant reformers. On balance, however, the historical, linguistic, and codicological evidence suggests that the securely datable fifteenth-century texts did not originate as acts of defiance directed at Arundel in the heat of the moment immediately following the promulgation of the Constitutions. It seems inherently more likely that these plays evolved into the form in which they were recorded at a later moment that perfectly accords with the auspices that were identified for the Mary Play above. This delivers a picture of the drama we know from those late manuscript witnesses developing naturally in step with the religious reformers who set to the work of renewal after the Council of Constance. The older generation, led by Chichele and Hallam, were men who had been there with Wyclif and internalized the arguments about the need for lay empowerment, but had gone their own ways, surviving to revitalize the Pecham agenda; the younger ones, like Bekynton, were fiercely intellectual educators with humanist inclinations and increasingly European perspectives.

**Belief and Knowledge in Love’s Mirror**

Valerie Allen

In the long history of knowing, where would one position Nicholas Love’s Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ? Of course, the Mirror does not busy itself with conventional epistemological questions such as ‘under what conditions do I know that I am reading this text?’, but that fact should not exempt from a history of epistemology a text that dwells obsessively on knowing, imagining, and believing. Its concern with spiritual experience, affect, and belief does make it hard to categorize in epistemological terms, which often content themselves with examples drawn from an empirically verifiable external world populated with what J. L. Austin calls ‘moderate-sized specimens of dry goods’, yet the difficulty only begs the question of our definition of knowledge and horizon of belief.¹ Too late, too unsystematic, too moralizing, and too popular to expound principles of scholastic faculty psychology and too early even to anticipate an empiricist description of knowledge, the Mirror nonetheless wields a rich lexicon for mental acts, employing Middle English terms neither technical nor exclusive: take gode hede, vedurstande (p. 28); bétenk, hatte in mynde (p. 34); mysherleue, fals bouht (p. 93); trow faie & kyleue (p. 30); to name

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few. The ordinariness of the vocabulary separates the Mirror from scholastic acuity psychology with its arsenal of special, Latinate terms: intellectus agens, intellectus possibilis, sensus communis, sensus particularis, species, intentio, and so on. In this essay the question is posed in particular relation to Love's Mirror, but it also applies generally to devotional texts of the period that are similarly lemed not to 'do' philosophy.

There are good enough reasons for discounting Love's text from conversations of a philosophical nature. In one particular passage on the Trinity, amplified by Love, he endorses the topic off limits to rational inquiry, thereby turning it from a truth known to a truth believed, from a matter for reason to one for faith. Love's position is a far cry from that of Peter Abelard, whose claim that the Trinitarian nature can be understood in part by human reason earned his work condemnation at the Council of Soissons in 1121 and 1141 at the Council of Sens. In his passage discussed here, four kinds of word clusters denote different kinds of apprehension: sensory perception (see with thi bodily eye, conceive with thi bodily wit, herest, se with thi bodily eye, fele with thi bodily witte, herest); rational hought (understand by mannes reson, penkest, study, occupy [...] thi wit, undurstande it, by kyndly reson); erroneous speculation (erre, supposing); and obedient belief (beware, take here a general doctrine, blyewe thi pase by thi kyndly reson, rowe sofastly, go no ferber).

Bot nowe bare heere that you erre not in imaginacion of god & of thi holy Trinity, supposing that thee be persons be godere be son & be holpe gonne bene as be echip men, hat you seest with thi bodily eye, be which ben be diverse substances, ech departed fro opere, so that none of hem is opere. Nay it is not so in thi gosly substance of thi holpe trinity, for thi persone ben on substance & on god, & eat is here none of thee persons opere. Bot [his] maip you not undurstande by mannes reson ne conecuyte with thi bodily wit, & perfore take here a general doctrine in his

affective intensity. On the matter of the Sacrament, counsels Love, believe 'with a buxom dree', and even if the doctrine should prove 'not sope', you will be credited for 'oure guide will to god & holy churc'. Put in its most cynical formulation, Love emerges as a premature Counter-Reformationist, the Mirror the positive face of re-education, and religious devotion the pay-off of intellectual conservatism. Affective piety has aptly enough been styled by Ryan Perry as 'anti-intellectual, unthinking "thinking"'.

None of this is wrong, although in fairness to Love it is worth noting how conventional and commonplace are cautions against trying to understand the Trinity by the standards of human reason. Our 'chain of reason' stretches too far, says Alan of Lille, when it assays the 'inexpressible secrets of the godhead'.

In Purgatorio III, 34–37, Virgil warns Dante: 'Foolish is he who hopes that our reason can compass the infinite course taken by One Substance in three Persons. Be content, human race, with the quia.' Virgil performs the truth of his own words when, at the end of Purgatorio, as embodiment of human reason, he cedes his place to Beatrice to guide the poet through a place where human reason cannot lead the way, Paradiso. Reason goes so far and then is transcended by faith. Humans can reason their way to knowledge of God as unmoved mover, as first cause, as a necessary being, as ens realissimum — these are the preambles to faith — but they cannot reason their way to knowledge of the Trinity, for this is a mystery of faith.

It is worth pursuing for a moment this quia to which Virgil refers because it leads to some useful distinctions in the kinds of knowing at issue. Quia reasoning is one half of a distinction that traces back to Aristotle's Posterior Analytics, the other half being propter quid reasoning; the terms are also known as knowledge of the fact and knowledge of the reasoned fact. Knowledge of the reasoned fact derives from premises in the mode of classic syllogistic reasoning; it offers a first-order or intrinsic proof of cause on account of the thing's nature (propter quid). This kind of reasoning yields knowledge that is deductive, certain, and rests squarely on human resources. Knowledge of the fact also is an operation of human reason and can refer to the same piece of knowledge as does knowledge of the reasoned fact, but it does not follow deductively and hence necessarily from causal premises; with quia reasoning, one knows that something is the case but not why it is the case. Quia reasoning and faith are not that different, for in both you 'trowe sofastly pat it is so'. Both kinds of argument, quia and propter quid, follow syllogistic reasoning, the distinction between them being one between the practical or concrete and the theoretical or abstract, the more abstract science generally being held the superior in the Aristotelian hierarchy of knowledge. In Aristotle's example, the doctor needs to know that circular wounds heal more slowly, the geometrician why.

Virgil urges Dante to desist from attempting what he does not have the intellectual ability to do, namely, justify the fact of the Godhead as the effect that follows necessarily from reasoned knowledge of its cause and instead to accept the fact, namely, that God is three persons in one, as a given premise. It is the same truth that is apprehended, but it is known in a different way.

Aristotelian logic is probably the last thing on Love's mind, but the gesture he makes in this passage is kindred in spirit to Dante. The intensity of affective piety that Love exhorts can be read as an indication of knowing in a different mode, of a change of direction from what is known to how it is known, and in this reorientation, the will comes into play. The intellectual virtues, most explicitly in Aristotle and scholastic neo-Aristotelianism, had long played a role in the business of knowing, though they were sidelined in post-medieval philosophy as interest in the intellectual virtue of the knower waned in favour of correlating the knower's beliefs with knowable objects in an external world.

6 Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', pp. 585–54, and for following citation of Love's text.

7 See Love, Mirror, ed. by Sargent, p. intro 75.

8 Ryan Perry, "Thynk on God, as we door, men that suyenke": The Cultural Locations of Meditations on the Suffer of Our Lord and the Middle English Pseudo-Benaventuran 'Tradition', Speculum, 86 (2011), 419–54 (p. 454).


Love, however, is no respecter of this venerable distinction between intellectual and moral virtue, for in his totalizing vision it is the same will that directs thought and action, knowledge and ethics. Observation for Love is less theory-laden than it is will-driven.

II

Dante draws from a Thomist tradition, which, although it shares much common ground with the Bonaventuran tradition, possesses one general difference foregrounded here, that is, with respect to the will. Where Thomism gives an intellectualist emphasis on the role of reason in sin, Bonaventuran thought exhibits a voluntarist strain, an assertion of the freedom of the will ‘to act against reason’s dictates.’

When Love cautions the reader to ‘beware’ that they ‘erred not in imaginacion of’ the Trinity, ‘supposing’ that the Godhead is like three different human creatures, he calls upon the elect rather than rational resources of the reader to control an erring that occurs less by logical misstep than by willfulness, although faulty reasoning no doubt contributes to the problem.

As long as answers to questions about knowledge are sought exclusively in the machinery of cognition then the role of affect and choice will seem tangential to epistemology, an ad hominem fallacy. As long as truth is restricted to the adequation between knowing subject and known object, adaequatio intellectus et rei, knowledge becomes merely a bearer of relation, an instrument in the most utilitarian of senses, a transparency through which one gazes on a world of those reassuringly real dry goods; consequently, the moral complex of the knower seems largely irrelevant to the act of knowing. In light of this description of epistemology, Love’s ‘Keep Out’ placed at the boundary between meditation on Christ’s humanity and contemplation of Christ’s divinity does look like a gratuitous hindrance to a morally neutral cognitive activity, like a neglect of the talent of reason (supposedly) exclusive to the human species. This essay argues against any apparent segregation of ethics and epistemology in the Mirror, and for a mode of being in which knowing, willing, and feeling entail each other.

15 Bonnie Kent, Virtue of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), p. 95. Kent’s book lucidly demonstrates the subtlety of both intellectualism and voluntarism, the impossibility of reducing either to one set of doctrines, and the considerable overlap between them.


has if that option is naturally suited to it. In contrast, Bonaventuran epistemology emphasizes the role of the intellect in judging. It offers a more voluntarist theory of the will, allowing the self-motion to act independently of the intellect and in that sense making it free. So the will does not simply execute the judgement of the intellect but can reject the intellect's judgement. The will thus remains independent of the mind to some degree, allowing it the dangerous freedom to be 'not merely weak but perverse.'

Love's Mirror makes no rigorous distinction between these theological camps, which have more overlap and less purism than the above synthesis suggests: it demonstrates right will acting as determined by reason's judgment; yet it also demonstrates evil will acting capriciously. At the scene of the Annunciation, Mary gives her assent to receiving the Incarnation, and her will clearly executes the right judgement of her reason, for she listens to the angel's words ('hale her'), comprehends the message ('wisely vnstand'), deliberates ('by gude aysement'), and chooses ('asaf hire aysent') (p. 27). Yet in contrast to Mary, whose assent at the Annunciation is borne of 'mekenes', Eve assents to sin 'bore pride' (p. 29). No mention is made of the fruit appearing to her flawed judgement as a seeming good, which Eve's will then desires necessarily. We cannot even receive grace 'bot we willen & desire it' (p. 114), says Love, suggesting that humans of their own accord can freely and rightly choose to accept grace — a position that at first blush bears some risk of resemblance to the heresy of Pelagianism.

One particular word in Love's text brings together the domains of perception or knowledge and willing: entente. Where in modern English the words 'attention' and 'intention' have split from each other, the one Middle English word contains the varying shades of meaning now bifurcated in separate terms. For the most part, Love uses the word to mean 'attentiveness'. The reader is repeatedly asked to take 'gude entente to alle both here seide & done' (p. 48). Entente also occurs in the text (less often, admittedly) in the sense of intention: for example, the reader is exhorted to 'eschew alle corrupte entent of veyn yowe' (p. 55). And there are occasions when the text, while supporting a dominant meaning, bears semantic nuance of the other: as when Mary, wondering at words of prophesy spoken about the infant Jesus, 'kept hem by gude entente prieuyly in hir herte' (p. 48). How should that phrase translate — 'she stored them “faithfully” or “deliberately” or “carefully” in the deepest recesses of her memory'? Consciousness (attention) and purposiveness (intention) cannot be fully separated in such mental acts, for cognition and volition inform each other.

The elision of meanings of ‘intently’ and ‘intentionally’ in the word entente and its grammatical variations leads to a deeper understanding of the mental life of Love's reader. In philosophy of mind, the term 'intentionality', itself a scholastic term revived by Franz Brentano, is used to distinguish the different modes in which thoughts about things and those actual things exist. Commonly described as 'aboutness', intentionality is a fundamental feature of mental states and events; it refers to the mind's ability to represent conceptually the external world as well as objects that have no extra-mental existence such. By this distinction between the real and extra-mental status of things that are thought about, one avoids the naive realist fallacy of assuming that if one can think about something, it must have some existence out there, independent of the thought of it. What is the ontological status of Love's visualizations? They are, of course, imaginings, which allow the mind to dwell on things that have mental existence only, and Love consistently emphasizes the 'as if' quality to his reader's thoughts: 'tak hede & haue in mynde as thou were present in pe pryue chaumbe o? our lady' (p. 24). Thought about thus, the Incarnation exists conceptually, having what philosophy of mind calls 'intentional inexistence', but as with so many philosophical concepts, the abstractness of intentionality derives from a concrete action, in this case of stretching out towards something (from Latin intendere). That buried sense of physical directedness brings consciousness and volition into close semantic range of each other despite necessary cautions against confusion of philosophical inten-
tionality with ordinary intention.\textsuperscript{16} Love’s visualizations are not only mental states; they are thoughts that occur in bodies that stretch out, feel, and weep. As McNameer aptly demonstrates with her gloss of *biholden* as ‘to hold with the eyes’, pointing out how Love’s vocabulary in certain moments equivocates between ‘hold’ or ‘behold’,\textsuperscript{27} so Love’s holy imaginings involve a fully sensate experience that dilates pupils, quickens heartbeats, beads skin with sweat, fills eyes with tears. Indeed, for some believers, without stretching that out, that last to touch, there is little knowing. This intentional knowing gives a body to thought. To meditate thus with *gude entent* involves a consciousness that is ‘about’ in its fullest sense of being directed, of fixed attentiveness, and of active willing; it indicates knowing in a different mode, where the what of thinking is driven by the how of thinking. The affective piety Love advocates makes knowing a matter of ethical being and calls for a reconsideration of the knowing subject, the topic of the next section.

III

The ethical knowing that Love’s affective piety entails radically resituates the knower, whom I call ‘she’ in consideration of McNameer’s claim for the gendered logic of affective piety, namely, that ‘to feel compassion is to feel like a woman’\textsuperscript{23} — for pride lies at the heart of wrong knowing, humility at the heart of right. As Virgil warns Dante (the narrator to content himself with the *quia* when thinking on the Trinity, the two of them stand on the lowest slope of Purgatory, where the graven sin — contumacity — is punished. Bernard of Clairvaux, often invoked in Love’s text, addresses the same sin when he warns those leading the cloistered life to avoid *curiositas*, which is the first step of pride (*superbia*).\textsuperscript{24} In view of Love’s project of adapting the ‘contemplative practices of the enclosed religious’ for ‘lay audiences’,\textsuperscript{20} Bernard’s warning against pride extends also to simple souls, whose worldly obligations render them even less qualified than a monk to nurture imaginings about theological mystery. It is a theological commonplace that pride is the source of sin, but here we think of it in relation to how it affects the reader’s cognitive processes. What does it mean for a simple soul to have humility in knowing? It is unsatisfying to regard Love’s command to believe—that rather than to reason—why as brute dogmatism, and misleading also to represent reason as ethically neutral, yet it is not immediately apparent how humility can be the condition of thought. In the spirit of, yet without any textual connection to Socrates’ *γάρ δὲ, ἄσπερ οὐν οὐκ οἶδα, οὐδὲ οἶκα*, Love’s enjoiner can best be understood as a call to his reader that what she cannot know as a deduced certainty she should not presume to know for a deduced certainty.

Ethical knowing requires the emptying of ego, the sign of which is abjection, a word Love’s text repeats persistently, as noun and adjective. The *MED* gives two meanings for *ME abject*; (1) cast out, rejected; (2) humble or of low estate (of persons), worthless or of low quality (of things), and menial or dishonorable (of tasks). The *Mirror* uses the word in a range of meanings, and its frequency increases around references to Christ and Mary. In a cluster of passages added to the original, taken from Bernard of Clairvaux, Love emphasizes the Virgin’s meekness: ‘Bot jis mekenes [of Mary’s] was not litel, for as [Bernard] seif, it is not much to praise mekenes in abdition, but it is a grete vertue & seldom seen mekenes in wirchipe’ (p. 27). Love, that is, shows himself particularly interested in the virtue of humility. What the *MED’s* discrete lemmata cannot show is the connection Love creates between abjection and the will. Of Christ before he began his ministry, Love comments that people ‘held him as an ydote & an ydul man & a sole, & so it was his wille to be hald as vnworpi & abiete to be worlde for oure saucion’ (p. 62). Christ ‘meked him self by abiections & lowed him self as nouht’ (p. 62). Like Middle English *naken* (to strip, to bare oneself), *meken* has lost its force as an active verb in Modern English. Poverty of mind does not just happen; it is sought, cultivated, and maintained. Nothing like modesty ‘litte’, the meekness Love asks of his reader is a painful *naking* of ego that requires the active and constant will not to think in the ‘I’. More than lack of arrogance of mind, meekness involves active warring against an innate tendency to presume.\textsuperscript{35} The horizon of knowledge looks different

\textsuperscript{16} Jacob, *Intentionality*.


\textsuperscript{28} McNameer, *Affective Meditation*, p. 7.


\textsuperscript{30} Petyr, ‘*Thynk on God*’, p. 422.


\textsuperscript{35} Contributing to recent philosophical interest in virtue epistemology, Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood have a chapter on humility as an intellectual virtue in *Intellectual Virtues: An*
when she eliminates the filter, ‘it seems to me that [...]’. Her egoless subject position becomes one in which she finds ortheness within, for she is a pilgrim and stranger not only to worldly people but also and more radically to herself (p. 66). Perhaps Margery Kempe’s persistent self-reference as ‘this creature’ — her amanuenses notwithstanding — attempts to be in line with this emptied ego, a self-naughting, which, as Walter Hilton says, is a condition of meekness: ‘until a soul can felabli thorough grace noughten himself [...] he is not perfighteli meke’.33 Denoting meekness, self-naughting can be distinguished from the riskier kind of insensate non-being that extreme contemplatives seek in order to transcend physicality and achieve union with God.34

Only when ego is naughted can the feelings cultivated by affective piety be appreciated as communally constructed and experienced. It is easy enough to assume that the feeling most associated with Love’s affective piety — compassion — is bounded by and the exclusive property of an individual self, that is, as an essentially personal, subjective emotion. But remove ‘I’, and the boundaries between self and other believers rearrange themselves — including the boundary between simple soul and advanced contemplative.

Love’s implied readers are ostensibly ‘ysple creatures be whiche as childryn hauen nede to be fedde with mylke of lyve doctrine & not with sadde mete of grete clargye & of [h]ey contemplacion’ (p. 10). In her examination of Love’s modifications of the Meditations vitae Christi, Karnes rightly notes how Love’s meditations curb his reader’s progress to contemplation of ineffable truths such as the Trinity by restricting her holy imaginings to the material world and by making affect an end in itself.35 The implied reader under discussion is an idealized figure as represented in Love’s text, distinct from the historical audiences constituted by and reflected in individual manuscripts. Ryan Perry usefully complicates Karnes’s observation by noting that the earliest historical audience of Love’s text comprised ‘religious and high-status members of the laity’, a group markedly lacking in readers among the labouring classes and ‘simple souls’ only by a long stretch of the imagination.36 The point for this discussion is that the spiritually initiated reader who has meeked and naughted herself will find deep things in the apparently propaedeutic nature of the meditational exercises Love supplies; even if not a simple soul, she reads as a simple soul. Like an embedded crystal that covers a precious relic, whereby one can marvel at the gleam of its polished cabochon surface or gaze through it to the sacred interior it discloses and magnifies, so these holy imaginings in their simplicity offer lessons both to those limited by lack of meditational experience, of leisure, or of intellectual ability and to the contemplatively experienced.

The claim that affective piety overruns the boundaries of self needs further explanation in light of this text that itself overruns with invitations to inwardness. Inward, inwardly, or some variation of the term occurs almost on every page of the Mirror and often multiple times within the same passage. The reader is constantly exhorted to ‘haue inwarde compassion’ (p. 42) at some scene or — in the adverbial form — to ‘haue inwardly compassion’ (p. 38). In some instances, and with some justification, the MED can find no other reason for its presence in certain texts than as a ‘more intensive’, like one of those discourse particles such as ‘just’ or ‘like’ that means nothing even as it says everything.37

In the passage just cited, inwarde means ‘sincerer’, ‘heartfelt’. The word also means being hidden from view: Mary Magdalen while sitting at Jesus’s feet, with ‘grete inwarme sorowe & shame for hir synnes spake in hir herte to hir’ (p. 88). She speaks out her sorrow in her heart, inwardly, her words hidden from all but Christ, who hears and forgives her. A third sense occurs with reference to the three Marys after the Crucifixion, who, shedding tears, fall on their faces and ‘wrichipede inwardly’ the cross on which he had been crucified (p. 196). As they do so they weep, lie prostrate, and kiss the cross. Nothing is hidden from ocular view here, suggesting that inwardly means something like ‘spiritually’, ‘contemplatively’. Fourth and finally, when they find the tomb empty, they ‘inwardly behoidyng scene’ the stone rolled away (p. 196). The women are literally looking at the empty grave, so in what sense are they inwardly beholding? Though not glossed by the MED as such, inwardly could mean in this context something like ‘intently’, that is, entirely. The word also occurs in this sense in a non-devotional context, when Chaucer’s Troilus ‘gan right inwardly byholden’ Criseyde’s face (2.64–65).38 This use of the word suggests that what Troilus

34 ‘Self-naughting’ is noted as a heretical occupational hazard for contemplatives: Kerby-Fulton, Books under Suspicion, p. 268.
35 Karnes, ‘Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ’, p. 394.
37 MED, s.v. in-wardly (adv.) 3b.
38 MED, s.v. in-wardly (adv.) 4 (citing TC 3.264). Line reference from Geoffrey Chaucer,
and the three Marys alike see arrests and surprises them, causing cognitive disequilibrium, requiring them to process the meaning of what holds their gaze. The elided meaning of ‘intently’ and ‘intentionally’ thus thickens further by indicating not only aboutness but also inwardsness. Inwardsness by definition seems to imply a centripetal motion that closes in upon itself to form a figure yielding no break for intersection with or penetration by another body. Yet paradoxically, in her inwardsness, the reader reaches outward, for the compulsion of one who has meeked and naughted herself finds exteriority within and experiences a compassion that undoes punctual being as a discrete bundle of experience.

The inwardsness I have traced here in Love’s meditations marks the dissolution of ego and contrasts with two other kinds of inwardsness: the contrary individualism of pride; and the interiority that conventionally describes the ‘modern subject’.

The contrary individualism of pride is marked by ‘singularity’. Keep yourself, says Love, from ‘singulere preortagiti’, from thinking oneself more singular than others (p. 47). ‘Singular’ believers will mindlessly ‘rablene’ the Pater Noster but ‘sette [...] hit aeffection’ on their own ‘priuate praieres’ (pp. 84–85). The Middle English noun singularite has a range of meanings — the numeric opposite of plurality, solidarity, outstanding excellence, personal favour — but the one Love invokes most is contrariness, a vice against which Ancrene Wisse also warns while enumerating the various temptations to pride that beset the anchoress. Singularity is a classic symptom of pride, as anomalies of the deadly sin note. The Ancrene writer notes that the life led by as many anchoresses as ‘twenti, now, or more’ should be one in which

alle teeth an, alle i-tumt anes-weis, ant nam fromward other [...] for euch is withward other in an manere of lif-lade, as that ye weren an cuvent [...] ant thear as alle booth an, with an i-meane manere, ant withiuten singularite — ther is, an-fol from-mardschipe — lah thing i religiun, for hit towarpeath an-nesse ant manere i-meane [...]. Yef ei is i-mong ow the geath i singularite, ant [...] ah went ut uf the flo, that is as in a cloister thet Jesu is heh priur over, went ut as a teowi schept ant meacpeht hire ane into brees teile.

[all pull one way, and all are turned in the same direction, not away from one another [...] for you are all turned toward one another in a single manner of living, as though you were a single convent [...] since all are one, with a common way of life and without singularity — which a foul turning away, a low thing in religion,

for it breaks apart oneness and a common way of life [...]. If there is anyone among you who lives in singularity and [...] has left the flock (that is, as though in a cloister over which Jesus Christ is the supreme prior), she has gone out like a peevish sheep, and wanders alone into a tangle of srias.]^{40}

The MED defines the use of the word in this passage as ‘unusual or exceptional behavior’, a meaning that can shade into wrong doctrine, as in a (Wycliffite) reference to ‘error ne singularite against Goddis wille’. ‘Singular’ behavior in this sense seems to be characterized by contrariness, being different for the sake of asserting self-will and drawing attention to oneself. It is a bogus selfhood that can only define itself derivatively and privately by being and doing what others are not and do not. It seems approximate to ‘the fact or quality of differing or dissenting from others or from: what is generally accepted, esp. in thought or religion; personal, individual, or independent action, judgement, etc., esp. in order to render one’s self conspicuous or to attract attention or notice’, even though the earliest noted instance of this definition of singularity by the OED dates only from the sixteenth century.^{42} Further evidence for the perceived lateness of the vice comes in the following word histories: self-possession as rendered by the indefinite pronoun ‘oneself’ only emerges in the sixteenth century, while the words ‘selfhood’ and ‘ipseity’ come into English only in the seventeenth century, translating Jacob Boehme’s icheit or meinheit. In those early contexts, selfhood has largely negative theological associations of egoism and self-absorption. This early modern conception of willful selfhood seems so newfangled, so modern a posture, yet medieval singularite does not seem that different. Singularite is a banal caricature of the inwardsness Love inculcates through his meditations. Singularity is the act of a being who is punctual and atomic; what it means is not to be like anyone else — a meagre achievement for one in search of union with God and his creatures.


^{42} OED, s.v. singularity (n.) 7a.

^{43} OED, s.v. oneself (pron.) I (emphatic); II (reflexive). OED s.v. selfhood (n.) 1: 2. OED s.v. ipseity (n.). Jonathan Sawday, Self and Selfhood in the Seventeenth Century, in Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present, ed. by Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 29–48 (pp. 29–30).

See also Pros 7 of Alan of Lille, The Plain of Nature, trans. by Sheridan, p. 186.
Inwardness also differentiates itself from the interiority that conventionally describes the modern subject. By her claim for Love's restriction of the meditative scope of his reader to merely bodily things, Karnes argues for the preservation of the old hierarchy between lay and clerical and thereby problematizes any easy equation between inwardness in the Mirror and the inwardness often claimed as forerunner of Protestant individualism. That individualism is noted by Richard Popkin as a 'new standard for determining religious truth', who begins his History of Scepticism citing Luther's great refusal at the Diet of Worms: 'I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us. On this I take my stand. I can do no other.' In an early modern ideological turn, thinking in the I — guided for sure by rational dialogue and obedience to the authority of state and scripture — becomes a virtue. This 'I', no longer marked by the clerical/lay distinction, is increasingly secular and decreasingly in thrall to personal virtue (intellectual or moral) as the precondition of right knowing. It is a sceptical 'I' on the way to becoming critical. 'Premature reformers', Lollards can seem attractive for their willingness to critique authority, for what seems now a laudable refusal to accept being told to believe that rather than reason-why. In comparison to this integrity of conscience as final arbiter of belief, the inner resources of Love's believing subject perhaps seem blander, more credulous, less interesting. But, as shown above, Love's ideal reader enjoys no less inwardness than does Popkin's sceptical, Lutheran, conscience-ridden subject.

With at least one notable exception, histories of scepticism tend to have rather slim chapters on the Middle Ages, if any. Their story frequently begins with Descartes, with a backward look at Sextus Empiricus, and with some reason, for one cannot identify a sceptical tradition as such. Such engagement as there is with it is technically precise and often dispatched for the purpose of counter-argument than defence. The doubts of simple souls do not merit philosophical attention, although it seems fair to surmise that there was no less incredulity in the medieval era than there was in any other. The broad consensus of medieval Christian philosophy is that faith need not be blinkered nor reason godless, yet as John Arnold points out, the Middle Ages is habitually characterized as credulous of dogma, naively positive. Even if not dismissed as credulous, the era can be characterized as ultimately limited by the dogmas it zealously protected. As Delany claims: 'Despite a potentially revolutionary premise, then, the medieval sceptical philosopher generally stopped short of a revolutionary conclusion. He was able, through the separation of truths, to subordinate revolutionary logic to conservative doctrine.' She argues that by trusting too far in reason (as Aleander allegedly did), the result — ironically enough — is blind faith, because when confronted with the founding doctrines of Christian faith that defer logical consistency (the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Eucharist), reason can only either reject them or yield to fiduciistic acceptance. Yet what we see in Love's text is the performance of belief rich and complex enough to pre-empt scepticism, yet so fragile and contingent that it has to be vigilantly cultivated.

IV

In this fourth and final section, return to the opening question: in the long history of knowing, where would one position Nicholas Love's Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ?

The Mirror directs the energies of its reader if not towards the ineffable mysteries of the Godhead then towards what she can validate, namely, experience. In a double move that recovers faith from reason to experience, Love

47 John H. Arnold, Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 4: "There has been a long-standing tradition that claims that unbelief, in the sense of cynicism, atheism, irreligion and so forth, was "impossible" in the pre-modern period. Arnold's work, along with that of others, indicates a growing change in that perception. See also John H. Arnold, The Materiality of Unbelief in Late Medieval England, in The Unorthodox Imagination in Late Medieval Britain, ed. by Sophie Page (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 65–95. Carl Watkins, Providence, Experience, and Doubt in Medieval England; in Fictions of Knowledge: Fact, Evidence, Doubt, ed. by Yota Batsaki, Subha Mukherji, and Jan-Melissa Schramm (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 40–60.


49 Delany, Chaucer's 'House of Fame', p. 12.
encourages experiential affirmation of certain truths even as he forbids speculation about them. It is interesting that this apparently conservative turn from thought to feeling should be in step with a growing separation between theology and philosophy, with a shift from the realm of deductive ratio to the realm of experience and contingency, the whole new epistemological orientation which the fourteenth century itself described as transition from cognitio proper quid to cognitio quid. The experiential and affective bias of late medieval piety taps into philosophical tendencies that would develop in time into empiricism and challenge the very metaphysical postulates such piety affirmed. Although affective piety, with its broadly conceived representation of knowledge, and empirically inclined epistemology would take divergent courses, mutual interest could make fellow travellers of them for a while and seems to do so here. The same mutual interest makes an unlikely couple out of, on the one hand, the inward life of Love's reader, which in the immediate preserves rather than overturns lay/clerical hierarchy, and, on the other, the self-determination of seventeenth-century political philosophy, which overturns theonomy in favour of autonomy. How is the gude entent that characterizes the reader's holy imaginings grounded in the empirical world? In Aristotelian faculty psychology, the rational animal is built to understand universals-as-they-exist-in-particulars, built to know in not out of this world, which means that even universal concepts derive ultimately from sense particulars. But there is a problem, for where the intellect only understands universals, sense only apprehends particulars. Scholastic faculty psychology fabricates a complicated machinery to get intellect and sense somehow to meet up and talk to each other. The vis imaginativa is an interstitial power with the creative ability to concoct images that have no extra-mental reality out of combined sense percepts that do originate in extra-mental reality. Love's holy imaginings must then bridge the gap between sense and intellect. Furthermore, they lie between holiness and moral weakness (aevitio), for imagination is the power over which the reader can exert her will and the power that, if uncontrolled, will lead her into sin.

Love's narrative is highly graphic, so visualization is not hard for the reader. Added to that are the countless images available throughout churches and in illuminated manuscripts that describe exactly the Gospel scenes she is asked to imagine — Annunciation, Nativity, Magi, Flight to Egypt, Passion, Crucifixion, Descent from the Cross, and so on. These visions, available wherever she turns, empirically validate her meditations. In this way, imagination and sense-cognition keep in step with each other. If the meditative life can be affirmed at the sensory level, then faith, which Aquinas calls the mean between science and opinion, comes as close as it can to positive knowledge and grounds the believing subject for those critical moments when her faith has nothing to look at except a piece of bread, when she is asked to look past appearances to see with eyes of faith a body that has real presence in no ordinary sense of the word.

It has been noted how the holy imaginings of affective piety in general are incarnational, 'doggedly acemporal'; flattening historical perspective by making the biblical past into a present tense. What is striking, however, about Love's visualizations is how ponderously they inhabit mundane space and time, how dimensioned they are even as they transcend history in the linear sense of the word. Always aware of how long this or that process might take, Love abbreviates the one or draws out the other so as to mould thought into his reader's day and imaginative reserves. The mind requires filling with the right kind of thoughts as if it were a finite space that could only accommodate a finite number of ideas, much as Sherlock Holmes speaks of the human brain, which only a fool will clutter indiscriminately with any old piece of information. Busyness keeps that space of the mind full. Even if one is not numbered among the 'men that swynke', as Chaucer phrases it, even if one is not among the religious whose


52 On the active and passive intellect and its operations on sense percepts, see Aquinas, ST 1a. 79.

53 For a general summary of the vis imaginativa and its relevance to Love, see Karnes, 'Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ', pp. 388–94.

54 Kent, Virtues of the Will, p. 173.

55 ST 2a2ae 1.


work is prayer (ora re est laborare), these meditations are a kind of labour for
the mixed life that squeeze out unhelpful distraction. To what extent it is possible
for such distractions to be shut out of the mixed life is an open question.
Devout knowing requires the careful organization of experience, the building
up of habits, the performance of process with the entire week structured
around a programme of contemplative exercises. Constant repetition is key:
St Cecile 'set her meditation & her pough: niȝt & day' in the Gospel, so filling
up her mind that vain notions could find no point of access (p. 11). Apart from
this positive filling up of her day the reader must also flee 'pe noyse of vnclene
þouhtes' (p. 119). Since her consciousness is always consciousness of some-
thing, she must choose whether that something is of virtue or of vice. There is
no happy, Aristotelian golden mean between singularity and meekness. There
is no safe place in Love's Mirror where knowing is a neutral operation, a nifty
precision instrument for carving nature at her joints. It is that burden of the
will to know aright and virtuously that makes this medieval text so strikingly
current.

THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY AS THE GOLDEN AGE OF WOMEN'S THEOLOGY IN ENGLISH: REFLECTIONS ON THE EARLIEST RECEPTION OF JULIAN OF NORWICH

Kathryn Kerby-Fulton

In his classic Constitutional History of England, William Stubbs wrote of
the fifteenth century as 'a worn-out helpless age that calls for pity without
sympathy'. For Stubbs, 'all that was good and great' in medieval life 'was
languishing even to death' in that space between the Plantagenets and the
Tudors, 'darkest before dawn'. Beside this indictment, even C. S. Lewis's 'Drab
Age' and Nicholas Watson's era of 'draconian [...] censorship' after Arundel
pale in comparison. Stubbs may look old fashioned now, but despite recent
valiant attempts to raise the stock of Lydgate and his contemporaries, his com-
ments stand as a stark reminder of the steep odds modern scholarship faces in
revivifying fifteenth-century studies. There is at least one aspect of the period,
however — one Stubbs and Lewis would never have dreamed of — in which
the 'dawn' came early. The period after Arundel's Constitutions actually saw an
unprecedented rise in theological and mystical writing in English for and by
women. Even as alternative theologies engaging women and laity sometimes


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