SALUBRIOUS SURROUNDINGS

Twelfth-Century Cistercian Thought on Health, Environment, and the Soul

MA Thesis

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Introduction

"…there were twenty-one monks; and thus escorted by so goodly a company they eagerly headed for the desert-place called Cîteaux. This approached by men back in those days because of the thickness of grove and thornbush, was inhabited only by despicable and unapproachable the place was to seculars, the more suited it was for the monastic observance they had already conceived in mind, and for which sake they removing the dense grove and thornbushes, began to construct a monastery there…"[1]

Exordium Parvum

Throughout the descriptions of Cistercian abbeys and monasteries, their sites and surroundings have been described as desolate, isolated, and overtaken by the wilderness. A depiction reminiscent of Deuteronomy 32.10: "a place of horror and vast wildness", the abbeys were described as closed off from the chaos of the world and triumphing over the *locus horroris*. Originating from an ardent desire to live in undisturbed solitude, the monasteries symbolised a return to a lost paradise amidst untamed nature.[2] In line with this, the Cistercian abbey of Cîteaux is described as "a wilderness [and] a wasteland of howling desert" in the *Exordium Cisterii*, our earliest account about Cistercian origins.[3] The ideal was a *locus amoenus,* a place reminiscent of the Garden of Eden where humankind could live blissfully in good health and be safe from the corruption of the sinful world beyond the walls.

However, the romantic idea of the Cistercian monastery as a secluded refuge from a world of temptation and sin has proven to be misleading. There have been plethora of authors describing this apparent paradox of the desire to venture out into the wilderness and transform nature into a new paradise, and the reality wherein the monasteries and abbeys were not as isolated and unapproachable as once thought. Berman points out that while the sites of these Cistercian abbeys appear to conform to the descriptions found in twelfth century accounts, they may be more isolated today than they were in the Middle Ages.[4] Often, the monasteries were only sequestered in name and on paper, to conform to the ideal image of a refuge from

[1] *Exordium Parvum*, ch. III, 5. Procured from http://www.ocso.org/resources/foundational-text/exordium-parvum/ at 22/05/2017.

[2] A. Montanari, 'A sublime alliance sealed by the hand of God: theology and aesthetic anthropology', in: T.N. Kinder and R. Cassanelli (eds.), *The Cistercian Arts from the 12th to the 21st Century* (Montreal 2014), 21-30, 22; L.J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Dallas 1977), 31.

[3] K. Lackner, *The eleventh-century background of Cîteaux* (Washington 1973), 248 and 270.

[4] C.H. Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution. The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia 2000), 24.

the world. Their perceived austerity is also debunked in Berman's work, as he describes the diversity and deceptive soberness of the wealthy communities. As he writes, our conclusions about these sites are "based on vague memories" influenced by the very people who dreamed of the isolation of their monasteries.[5] Constable agrees with this sentiment, as he states that the monasteries were "closer than the sources suggest to settled areas and to roads and rivers".[6] He also undermines the notion that the abbeys were havens of peace built on perfect locations by mentioning that many of the monasteries moved at some time or another, often to get closer to sources of water or simply to accommodate the growth of the community.[7] Practical considerations appear to have been of greater importance than cultivating the harsh wilderness of nature.

While his work is focused on Bernard and the cultus around his person, Bredero discusses the monastery of Clairvaux and its expansion in great detail. He refers to the site of Clairvaux as 'a place of great abhorrence and desolation', and described the lifestyle of the monks as destitute.[8] While Bredero omits further analysis of the locations and their deceptive isolation, he does include the many metaphors Bernard used to describe the site, each of which had roots in the notion that the monastery was a beacon of light in the corrupted darkness of the surrounding world.[9] However, the fact that the descriptions of their isolation were misleading does not mean that the notion that Cistercians helped in reclaiming large amounts of waste land is also false. The most famous example is the reclamation of Les Dunes in Flanders, where 25,000 acres of harsh sand dunes were transformed into arable land.[10] In most cases, however, the clearing of forest or cultivating of ground was a routine task on a much less spectacular scale, certainly unworthy of deserving the descriptions it got.[11] It has become clear that venturing out into the *locus horroris* and transforming it into the desired *locus amoenus* was often not as grand a task as writers had made it seem.

Nature had the potential to be either horrendous or beneficial, to be the dreaded *locus horroris* or the heavenly *locus amoenus*. In the twelfth century, the views on nature were rather contradictory. On the one hand, the benevolence and beauty of nature, and on the other

[5] Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution*, 24.
[6] G. Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge 1996), 120.
[7] Ibidem, 120-121.
[8] A.H. Bredero, *Bernardus van Clairvaux: tussen cultus en historie* (Kampen 1993), 295.
[9] Ibidem, 301-305.
[10] Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality*, 298.
[11] Ibidem.

hand, its undeniable malevolence; nature was powerful through humankind's dependence on it for physical needs, and threatening on both a material and a spiritual level.[12] Nature was equated with *humanitas* or the virtue of man, and connected to humankind's *ratio* or divine reason.[13] But nature was also described as chaotic and irrational. These contradictory ideas on nature and its influence on humankind are present in the deceptive descriptions of the sites of the Cistercian monasteries. The abbeys are reflections of paradise, in which the benevolence of nature is cultivated, while the horrid irrationality of nature was kept out by the walls. At the same time, there is an abundance of descriptions focused on the physical beauty of the area; the abbeys were both 'a beautiful place in a vast wilderness' and situated in "the beautiful places of the wilderness".[14]

The belief in the benevolence and beneficial effects of nature can be traced back to Ancient Greece, but was quickly adopted into Christian thought. It was linked to the Garden of Eden where humankind had been able to live with perfect constitution and perfect health, in part because of their surroundings. The heavenly garden, to which the beautiful monasteries were compared, became a reflection of this paradise with all the benefits it brought. This connection between health, spirituality and nature within Cistercian monasteries has not been explored in detail, nor have they been studied as part of the medical knowledge of the twelfth century. As bulwarks of early medieval medicine, monasteries shaped and adapted existing medical traditions and the theories surrounding them. However, the monasteries were more than centres of medical knowledge and development; they were religious institutions with the corresponding ideas, theories and rationalisations. In other words, this is where the interactions between religious and medical theories and the fusion of secular and religious traditions took place.

Method and research question

This paper is focused on the paradox within Cistercian sources of the *locus horroris* and the *locus amoenus*, or the malevolence of nature versus its benevolence. Through analysing this paradox on the influence of one's surroundings, this paper aims to gain new insight into the way ancient medical thought was incorporated, adapted and fused into Cistercian ideas on health and medicine. This is achieved by searching Cistercian treatises and manuscripts for ancient thought, specifically the notions on nature, environment, and sense perception in

[12] Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 139.
[13] Ibidem, 141.
[14] Ibidem, 138.

relation to health. Through connecting these notions on environment, health, and illness to both the Cistercian ideals and the ancient thought, we can gain insight in the development of medicine and the influence of religious thought.

A selection of primary sources will be analysed and searched for references to ancient thought on sensory perception, surroundings, and health. I will describe how these references are used, and what messages they attempt to convey to their readers. By analysing the way the twelfth-century Cistercian sources regard the senses and the impact of one's surroundings, I will shed light on how these ideas were used and adapted to fit the Cistercian view on health and nature, and vice versa. To guide me in my analysis of the impact of one's surroundings, I will use the ancient thought on the *six non-naturals* as a theoretical framework. This framework will aid me in categorising my findings and by providing me with a 'point of departure' for my analysis. To gain this insight in the appropriation of classical knowledge into twelfth-century monastic thought on humankind, health and nature, the central question posed here is in what way ancient medical thought on health and the *non-naturals* was adapted and incorporated into twelfth-century Cistercian views on humans and their surroundings. To adequately answer this question, I will first provide a general introduction into the context of the twelfth century, the state of medical knowledge and its classical influences, and on relevant aspects of the Cistercian Order itself. Following this, I will provide an overview of my findings in the second chapter, which will aim to provide some basic insight on how the sources deal with sensory perception and the *non-naturals* in their contents, and how abundant the references to these topics are. The third chapter will consist of a more detailed interpretation of the spiritual allegories and biblical references in relation to health and the body in Cistercian thought, and will aim to grasp what the authors were trying to convey in their work. It is in the latter chapter that we can uncover some of the ways in which the classical knowledge was adapted and incorporated into twelfth-century thought.

Sources and authors

I have made a selection of ten Cistercian sources from four authors. The majority of the texts are written by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153), meaning that for the bulk of my source material I am depending on one single author. In the case of the Cistercian Order and Bernard, I consider this dependency on his works appropriate. Bernard, as the driving force behind the Cistercian reform, shaped much of the mystical thought of the Order. The

theological inheritance of Bernard's work was of fundamental importance, and there are few Cistercian sources that were not influenced by his philosophy.[15]

Bernard joined the Cistercian Order in 1112 at the age of twenty-two. Three years later, he became abbot of the newly founded sister abbey Clairvaux. His first spiritual writings appeared as early as 1119, propagating reform ideas for the monastic communities where the texts circulated.[16] Reforming the church was his main aspiration and he believed the clergy should be examples for those around them. He subsequently wrote many texts instructing monks and bishops in proper conduct. Bernard was also very active in political matters and had a significant influence on the crusading movement.[17]

Bernard's writing was, like most Cistercian theological writing, aimed at a clerical and a monastic audience and focused on spiritual matters.[18] He wrote about the connection between humankind and the divine, providing a sort of methodology of religious growth. The texts are rich in doctrine and full of a fascination with the mystery of Christ and the divine.[19] Considering the scope of this paper, I have made a selection of his most suitable texts. First, his *Apologia*: it was written in 1125 at the request of William of St Thierry, whom I discuss below, and is possibly Bernard's most famous text. In the *Apologia*, Bernard takes position in the twelfth-century debate on the appropriateness of monastic art, which was one of the greatest controversies over art to occur before the Reformation. In line with Cistercian ideals, which will be discussed shortly in the next chapter, Bernard protested the use of monastic art for a variety of reasons, the most important one being that the artworks would form a spiritual distraction for monks.

Second, his *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* or *Sermons on the Song of Songs*.[20] This series of written out sermons, although unfinished, described the relationship between the human soul and the Divine as a spiritual marriage between the heavenly Bridegroom and the human Bride. Through allegory, Bernard interprets the Song of Songs, resulting in a series that summarises his own views and interpretations, and provides us with some insight in his mystical theology.

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[15] E. Jamroziak, *The Cistercians Order in medieval Europe 1090-1500* (New York 2013), 227.

[16] Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order*, 28.

[17] Ibidem, 33.

[18] Ibidem, 227.

[19] I. Biffi, 'Bernard of Clairvaux and the experience of mystery,' in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 17-20, 18-19.

[20] In my sources, I will be referring to these sermons as 'Commentary on the Song of Songs', as this is the name used in the source I have taken my references from.

Third, his *De Consideratione*, a letter written around 1150, and addressed to Pope Eugene III. Bernard sets out to warn the Pope, who was a former student of Bernard, of the many dangers and pitfalls of his vocation. He reminds Eugene III of the quiet Cistercian life he enjoyed before becoming Pope, and emphasises the importance of finding balance between his duties to the Church and his duties to his soul.

Fourth, *De conversione ad clericos sermo seu liber* or simply *De Conversione*, a text written in 1122. Written to address young ecclesiastics, he outlines the three levels of discourse to which they should be attentive throughout their clerical lives: the voice of God, the voice of the preacher, and the inner voice of their soul's conscience. Conversion, so Bernard implies, is the work and will of God, and entails a transformation of the person as a whole, though the most important change is within the human soul. In conversion, Bernard's role as preacher is small, yet he is able to aid this transformation through having His word heard.

Fifth, his *De Diligendo Deo*. This text describes the seven stages of loving God, as identified by Bernard. It begins at the love we have for ourselves and ends at the seventh stage, which cannot be wholly attained in this lifetime as it required one to be fully restored in the image and likeness of God, meaning when one is perfected and glorified in their resurrected body. These stages of ascent lead humankind in its union with God, and only through passing through all stages can one truly become whole.

Sixth is Bernard's first treatise, his *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*, written around 1120. It describes the various steps of humility and pride in humankind, and their influence on one's behaviour and purity. The text is rich in allegory and gives insight in the spiritual foundations on which the Cistercian Order was built.

The seventh and last source from Bernard's hand is his *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, written around 1128. As the title suggests, this text discusses the concepts of grace and free will. The treatise is addressed to William of St. Thierry, who requested Bernard discusses his ideas on these dogma's. Bernard does so, closely following the principles laid down by St Augustine, and defines the differences between our free will and our bodily appetites. My choice for these seven sources written by Bernard of Clairvaux was motivated by my desire to use a wide variety of texts with diverse audiences. Through this diversity I have been able to reconstruct his views and ideas on health and corruption, an insight which would have been much more limited if I had used a more narrow range of sources.

The second author was a friend of Bernard, and has been mentioned as the one who requested several of his texts to be written. William of St Thierry (c. 1085 – 1148) is known

as a rich thinker whose numerous works have been researched increasingly since the revived interest in Cistercian theology of the past decades.[21] Born to a noble family at Liège, William became a Benedictine monk at the Abbey of St Nicasius in Reims after his studies. Having met Bernard around 1118, the two monks forged a life-long friendship and frequently exchanged thoughts and ideas through letters. William, influenced by Bernard's theology, wished to join his friend at Clairvaux but the latter pressured him to remain Abbot of St Thierry, which he did until he withdrew to the Cistercian abbey of Signy in 1135. It is during this time that he wrote the bulk of his work; the treatise *The Nature of the Body and the Soul* which I use here was probably written around 1140, eight years before William's death.[22]

William admits to relying heavily on past sources in the prologue of the work, yet his treatise contains the foundations of his theology. The two major themes of his *The Nature of the Body and the Soul* are humanity's self-knowledge and its place in Creation as the microcosm. William of St Thierry is distinctive in trying to give the twelfth-century wave of Arabic medical knowledge a solid place in his views on humankind.[23]

The third author, Isaac of Stella (c. 1100 – c. 1170), was born in England and moved to France to study theology. Around 1140 he became a monk at Stella, where seven years later he would become abbot until c. 1167. His *Letter on the Soul* was possibly written around 1162, although this has been challenged by C. Talbot who believes the text to be written prior to 1158.[24] The *Letter on the Soul* was directed at Alcher of Clairvaux, a monk with a strong interest in medicine and anthropological thought who requested a treatise on the nature and powers of the soul.[25] This request is covered in the first section of the source, whereas the second section discusses the threefold comparison of God, the soul, and the body. Contrary to William of St Thierry's work, the text contains little direct quotation of past authors. Instead, Isaac uses the newly available Arabic medical knowledge to substantiate his own original thought on the classification of body and soul.[26]

The last source in my selection, called *Description of the Position and Site of the Abbey of Clairvaux*, and can be found in a two-volume collection of Bernard of Clairvaux's work

[21] B. McGinn (ed.), *Three treatises on Man. A Cistercian Anthropology* (Michigan 1977), 27.

[22] For a more complete summary of William's life and thought, see for example the introductions to volumes I and II of *The Works of William of St Thierry*, written by J. Hourlier and J.M. Déchanet respectively.

[23] McGinn, *Three treatises on man*, 30.

[24] As estimated by J. Debray-Mulatier in: 'Biographie d'Isaac de Stella,' *Cîteaux* 10 (1959), 188, note 65. This claim has since been contested based on the presence of a copy of *De Spiritu et Anima*, which depends on Isaac's text, in an abbey's library in 1158. This would require Isaac's work to be older than this date.

[25] McGinn, *Three treatises on man*, 51.

[26] For an analysis of the ancient influences on Isaac's *Letter on the Soul*, see McGinn, *Three Treatises on Man*, 48-50.

composed by Samuel J. Eales in 1889. As the name suggests, it contains a description of the site of the abbey of Clairvaux and is noticeably written by someone who loved the abbey dearly. The author seems positively inspired by the location and surroundings of Clairvaux and spares no words in describing the features of the blessed place. The description of Clairvaux has in the past been ascribed to Bernard of Clairvaux himself, but this has been disputed by several historians since. Personally, I do not consider the text to fit Bernard's style and focus, and subscribe to the latter group's theory that an unknown Cistercian monk wrote this text.

Before I discuss the content of these sources in more detail, it is necessary to ensure it is set within the correct framework. The following chapter will contain a general introduction into the context of the twelfth century and the Cistercian Order.

Twelfth century views on health, religion and medicine

"…as a small drop of water appears lost if mixed with wine, taking its taste and colour […]. So it is with the natural life of the Saints; they seem to melt and pass away into the will of God. For if anything merely human remained in man, how then should God be all in all. It is not that human nature will be destroyed, but that it will attain another beauty, a higher power and glory."[27]

Bernard of Clairvaux

The spiritualistic tendency to speculate on man and his relation to God was characteristic to the twelfth century and can be found in many Cistercian texts. They found themselves at a point in time where past anthropological traditions and medical theories, originating in ancient Greece, met and were transformed by twelfth-century theology. It is this tendency, combined with a strong interest in medicine and a distinct view on how monks should live, that resulted in the body of texts that are under review in the following two chapters. The transformation of anthropological tradition and the appropriation of this ancient thought into twelfth-century religious thought created a mix of medical knowledge, mysticism, and religion that set Cistercian beliefs apart from many other monastic orders.

To fully understand and properly analyse Cistercian thought on man, health, and the soul, it is important to take note of the influences and traditions they based their views on. This will help us understand how these traditions were adapted and transformed. The following chapter will quickly glance over these influences and provide some insight in the twelfth century, thought on health and medicine, and the Cistercian Order itself.

The twelfth century was characterised by an influx of ancient thought, a renewal of theology, and anthropological speculation on man. [28] Newly available sources and their translations, rediscovered through the Arabic world, had a profound effect on the century as the new components of thought were eagerly adopted and shaped to fit existing ideas on man and God. The expansion in thought that followed was heavily dependent on these sources: the Judaeo-Arabic medical and philosophical material, and the *Orientale lumen*, the writings of

[27] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Diligendo Deo,* 45.

[28] Naturally, the term 'anthropological' was not one twelfth century theologians used themselves. In this paper, I will employ it as referring to their search for the role of man and his place in God's creation, as well as his relation to God himself.

the Greek Fathers.[29] The new material came in two 'waves'. First, the medical texts from the Arabic world, transmitted mainly through Constantine the African. He made available a wide range of Arabic medical knowledge that was much more advanced than what was present in Western Europe at that time. The second wave contained mainly philosophical works, such as Avicenna's commentaries on Aristotle.[30]

Among theologians, there was a fervent interest in the nature of the soul, the classification of its powers, and the manner of its union with the body. The Arabic medical material complemented this interest by having systematised the nature and powers of the soul and its relation to the body. This influence was important as foundation for a theory of the destiny of man as the image and likeness of God. Technical questions of psychology were directly related to a wider anthropological and spiritual program designed to provide a theoretical basis for man's return to God. This Greek Patristic thought brought with it some tools for systematising anthropological and spiritual though, but had a much deeper effect on the theology of the twelfth century than just that. Knowledge of medicine aided those who wanted to better apprehend man's relation to God, a pursuit that bore some resemblance to research on the view of man and ideas on the origin of the soul. Understanding the microcosm of man as created in the image and likeness of God would logically improve the understanding of the macrocosm of God's Creation.

Early medieval anthropological thought was heavily influenced by Greek and Hebrew views on man.[31] The tension between the Judaeo-Arabic thought, the ancient Greek thought, and the twelfth-century attempt at fusing their respective concepts of mankind resulted in inconsistencies and ideological problems. These were most apparent in relation to matters like the union of body and soul, and the relation of mankind to the divine.[32] Part of the classical thought that conflicted with Christian ideologies was adapted and shaped to better suit the latter thought system. For example, the Platonic understanding of 'image' (*eikon*) and likeness was adopted and shaped into a central anthropological concept which described man's relation to God.[33] In time, this allowed for a theological expression of the relation between man and the divine, and the creation of theories on regaining this 'likeness' to God which was lost through sin.[34]

[29] McGinn, *Three treatises on Man*, 22.
[30] Ibidem, 24.
[31] Ibidem, 2.
[32] Ibidem, 50.
[33] Ibidem, 4.
[34] Ibidem, 5.

The numerous and diverse channels through which the medical and anthropological views of the ancient world affected the Middle Ages have been thoroughly researched.[35] Their influences are easily recognisable. For example, by reading the works of Cistercian authors and analysing the contents of monastic libraries we can deduce that the works of Augustine and Gregory of Nissa were well known.[36] Since it goes beyond the scope of my research to describe the presence of ancient knowledge and texts in the Middle Ages in detail, I will limit myself to naming a few important influences.[37] Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430) and the Neo-platonic influences he adopted in his early work were of great importance to early medieval authors. He accepted man as a composite of body and soul; yet he never solved how the spiritual soul fuses with the substance of the body to produce man, a wholly different 'substance'.[38] Augustine was mainly interested in the moral life of man and described the soul as mediator between the spiritual and the material, between God and man. It is because of his work that the Neo-platonic hierarchical viewpoint of man as dynamic midpoint between the divine and earthly spheres was transferred to the Middle Ages.[39]

Other important influences can be divided into two groups: the Eclectic Tradition, and the Greek Patristic Tradition.[40] The former is a collection of texts on both Christian and pagan views on man, dating from the early fourth century to the late sixth. This body of diverse texts consists of many different literary genres and varied intellectual values, but all texts contain a strong intermingling of Christian and pagan knowledge. The coalescence of different sources of knowledge ensured its transmission into the Middle Ages as its capacity to be adapted to circumstance was quite large.[41]

The other important influence on medieval thought on man, medicine and spirituality was the Greek Patristic Tradition, with authors such as Origen (c.185 – c.254), Gregory of Nyssa (c.335 – c.395), and Nemesius (c. 390). A strong interest in medical and physiological knowledge is apparent in these sources. They transmitted the use of the symbols of 'health' and 'disease', influenced by Plato's use of the Socratic analysis of the unjust soul in relation

[35] McGinn, *Three treatises on Man,* 5.

[36] M. Casey, 'The Monastic Art of Lectio Divina', in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 215-222, 221.

[37] For an introduction to twelfth century Europe: R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven 1963); for a more extensive study on the influences of the classical world on anthropological views of the early Middle Ages: McGinn, *Three treatises on Man.*; Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*.

[38] McGinn, *Three treatises on Man,* 8.

[39] Ibidem, 9.

[40] Ibidem, 10.

[41] For a more extensive introduction to these texts: P. Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en occidente de Macrobe à Cassiodore* (Paris, 1948) ; E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York 1955), 585-587, 601-603; and (though imprudent) C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge, 1967), 45-91.

to the body. In other words, the notion that the 'health' of the soul would influence the health of the body, and vice versa, finds its way into the Middle Ages through this Tradition. Besides that, the Platonic idea of man as microcosm was strengthened through fifth-century Pseudo-Dionysius' thought on ascension and through John Scotus Eriugena's (c. 815) *Periphyseon*.[42]

Strong interaction between Platonic thought and biblical anthropology was often accompanied by an intense interest in medicine and physiology.[43] The period around 370-400 produced many such works, which had a strong influence on the comparable period in the twelfth century (1120-1170).

Medical knowledge and the senses

"Of necessity we are immersed in the surrounding air, and we eat, drink, wake, and sleep. We are not necessarily thrust against swords or beasts. Hence in the first category of causes but not in the second there is an art devoted to the protection of the body. Now that these matters have been set forth, we shall find, in each of these items which necessarily alter the body, its own kind of healthful causes. One comes from contact with the surrounding air, another from movement and rest of the whole body or its parts, a third from sleep and waking, a fourth from things taken into the body, a fifth from those that are excreted and retained, a sixth from affections of the mind."[44]

Galen of Pergamon

Early medieval medicine had a therapeutic orientation. Simple domestic medicine was common and most people had some notion of how to deal with small cuts, bruises and a simple cold.[45] If more specialised knowledge was required, communities called upon their midwives, bonesetters, and those with knowledge of herbal remedies. At a more professional level, there were apothecaries, trained surgeons, medical practitioners and, from the twelfth century onward, university-educated physicians.

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[42] McGinn, *Three treatises on Man*, 17.

[43] Ibidem, 16.

[44] C.G. Kühn, *Claudii galeni opera omnia* (Hildesheim, 1964-65) vol. I, 367: "Necessario quidem omnino in ambiente aere versamur, edimus, bibidus, vigilamus et dormimus; ensibus vero et feris non necessario objicimur. Unde in priore causarum genere ars versatur, quae corpori tuendo dicata est, non autem in posteriore. His igitur expositis, in singulis eorum, quae necessario corpus immutant, proprium salubrium causarum genus inveniemus, Unus quidem ex ambientis aeris contactu, alterum ex motu et quiete, tum corporis universi, tum ejus partium. Tertium ex somno et vigilia. Quartum ex his, quae assumuntur. Quintum ex his, quae excernuntur et retinentur. Sextum ex animi affectibus."

[45] D.C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science. The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, Prehistory to A.D. 1450* (Chicago 2007), 331.

Among people, there was a strong interest in ways to avoid illness, to protect oneself from disease, and to remain healthy. From the twelfth century onwards, the growing body of ancient medical treatises available in the West stimulated the development of preventative medicine. Aimed at preserving health through managing influences such as diet, rest, and emotions, preventative *regimina* helped people control the effects of their environments on their constitution.[46]

Four humours, each with their own 'qualities' and element, were thought to keep the human body balanced and functional. These were the blood, the phlegm, the choler, and the black bile. In a healthy person, these humours would be in a state of *eucrasia* or balance, as any surplus would be excreted. Only a minor imbalance would remain which would determine that person's temperament and character. A slight excess of blood, for example, would lead to a sanguine temperament, while an excess of black bile would cause a more melancholic character. A larger excess or deficiency of any of the four humours was dangerous, as this would lead to sickness and, eventually, death. To complicate matters more, the humours were easily influenced by the nature of diet and the environment in which the person lived. As a consequence, people had to pay heed to a good balance of heat, cold, moisture, and desiccation, or risk falling ill. These environmental factors were called the six *non-naturals* and formed the basis of regiments to preserve health. They are described by Galen in the fragment above. Simply said, the *non-naturals* are all the 'general aspects' and activities which define a person's way of life.[47]

While the concept of the six *non-naturals* originated in ancient Greece, the idea of health and environment took root in Christian thought.[48] It became connected to the Garden of Eden where, as the gates of this paradise were shut for humankind forever, Adam and Eve not only lost their home but also their sound health and their immortality. It was generally thought that

[46] C. Rawcliffe, ''Delectable Sightes and Fragrant Smelles': Gardens and Health in Late Medieval and Early Modern England' in: Garden History Vol. 36, No. 1 (2008), 3-21, 4; A. Classen, 'Introduction: Bathing, Health Care, Medicine, and Water in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature. Explorations of Textual Presentation of Filth and Water* (Arizona 2017), 1-87, 3.

[47] L. García-Ballester, *Galen and Galenism. Theory and Medical Practice from Antiquity to the European Renaissance*; J. Arrizabalaga et al. (eds.) (Hampshire 2002), 109; Classen, A., 'Introduction: Bathing, Health Care, Medicine, and Water in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age,' in: Classen, A. (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 1-87, 13.

[48] D. Tomíček, 'Water, Environment, and Dietetic Rules in Bohemian Sources of the Early Modern Times,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 441-457, 441; D.L. Stoudt, 'Elemental Well-Being: Water and Its Attributes in Selected Writings of Hildegard of Bingen and Georgius Agricola,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 193-220, 193.

God had blessed them with perfect constitution and, within the Garden, their heavenly surroundings and diet had ensured perfect health.[49] The balance between their four bodily humours could not be disturbed within the Garden and the Tree of Life would have halted the natural process of decay, which outside this paradise eventually would cause death. After the Fall, the perfect environment was lost and the equilibrium of humours which ensured health was disturbed. Humankind became susceptible to disease. Without the Garden of Eden, they succumbed to illness and, even worse, to sin. While it was impossible to immerse oneself into an environment as perfect as the Garden of Eden, it was generally believed that similar environments would be beneficial to health and constitution.

Diet was one of the most important aspects of the six *non-naturals*. Once food was ingested and 'cooked' in the stomach, the partially digested matter would be transported to the liver where it was transformed into the four humours.[50] From there, the blood and the rest of the humoural matter, now called the *natural spirit*, passed through the veins, nourishing the body and allowing it to grow. The *natural spirit* that reached the heart would mix with air from the lungs as it passed through the ventricular septum, and then enter the arterial system as *pneuma* or *vital spirit*. This carried heat and life throughout the body, similar to how the *natural spirit* transported food.[51] The *vital spirit* that reached the brain would be purified further by air from the nostrils and gain the power to activate the motor neurone system and mediate between brain and senses. This substance was called the *animal spirit* and animated both body and mind, influencing behaviour and giving expression to the temperament induced by the humours. Besides this, it was thought to form the link between body and soul.[52]

As above description already suggests, the *vital* and *animal spirits* were rather sensitive to environmental factors such as the quality of the air and the scents in their surroundings. These invisible influences would enter the body through nostrils, mouth and pores in the skin and have a strong impact on the *animal spirit*, because the smells would transmit the properties and very nature of the thing they originated from.[53] This way, malicious and corrupt smells were thought to 'corrupt' the *animal spirit* and thus the body and soul it animated. Similarly, the purity of the air inhaled into the lungs would determine the strength

[49] Rawcliffe, 'Delectable Sightes', 7.

[50] Ibidem, 8.

[51] Ibidem.

[52] García-Ballester, *Galen and Galenism.* 204.

[53] Ibidem, 9. The concept of properties also applies to other environmental aspects, such as food and water: S. Gordon, '*Mens sana in Corpore Sanus:* Water, Wellness, and Cleanliness in Five Fifteenth-Century Medical Manuals,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 424-440, 429.

of the *pneuma* which invigorated the vital organs.[54] 'Good' or pleasant smells were thought to fortify and strengthen the body, whereas the 'bad' and unpleasant smells would hinder proper nourishment of the organs, or even accelerate the spread of disease.

The other senses had a similar impact on health and were each considered to influence the *pneuma* or the *natural spirit* in their own way.[55] The surrounding air was thought to play an important role here, as it was believed it carried more than just scents. In a similar way, the other sensory impressions, like sight and sound, were also thought to travel through the air as 'forms' or 'virtues' of the thing their originated from. When the sensory organs picked them up, they would impress their properties upon the *pneuma* and either fortify or corrupt it. A similar transfer of properties took place when foodstuffs were processed by the body; the humours that were distilled from the food would carry its properties, which would in turn affect the body and mind.[56] Some herbal waters, for example, were thought to cleanse both body and soul, as they were considered a cure for sins like sloth and lechery.[57]

Environment and diet were crucial aspects of thought on health and disease, but there was more to the six *non-naturals* that Galen described. Besides diet and the surrounding air, he also considers activity, rest, and emotions to have a similar impact on people's constitutions. Through similar processes as the ones described above, they were thought to imprint the 'nature' of the action and environments upon the *animal spirit*, resulting in either strengthening or weakening the person's *spirit*, nature and, therefore, constitution. Illness was therefore often treated with a combination of dietary regiments, behavioural adjustments, and environmental modifications as all of these aspects had an influence on a person's health.[58]

[54] Rawcliffe, 'Delectable Sightes', 9.

[55] Gordon, '*Mens sana in Corpore Sanus*' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 424-440, 426.

[56] The properties of plants and foods could also be absorbed by water and then transferred to a person, such as in herbal drinks or baths: Gordon, S., '*Mens sana in Corpore Sanus:*' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 424-440, 431.

[57] Gordon, '*Mens sana in Corpore Sanus*' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 424-440, 433.

[58] Ibidem, 435.

Cistercians, monasteries, and medicine

"We Cistercians, the first founders of this church, by the present document are notifying our successors how canonically, with what great authority, and also by whom and by what stages their monastery and tenor of life took their beginning, so that, with the sincere truth of this matter made public, they may the more tenaciously love both the place and the observance of the Holy Rule there initiated somehow or other by ourselves, through the grace of God; and that they may pray for us who have tirelessly borne the burden of the day and the heat; and may sweat and toil even to the last gasp in the strait and narrow way which the Rule points out; till at last, having laid aside the burden of flesh, they happily repose in everlasting rest." [59]

Exordium Parvum

In the first half of the twelfth century a manuscript, the *Exordium parvum*, was produced by the Cistercians to document the beginnings of their Order.[60] Both indirectly and in concrete terms, it gives us insight in what the Order cherished and what the values and goals of the monks would have been. The cited prologue of the *Exordium parvum* above, for example, gives us some insight in what the Cistercian Order stood for. The *sanctae regulae*, the Holy Rule of Saint Benedict, was of great importance. It dictated that the life of a monk should be lived under the guidance of the gospel, in an environment saturated with the reading of the scriptures.[61] This meant continuous repetition of the texts as a means to retaining mindfulness: in public, in private, during work and meditation. However, a monk's life did not consist only of reading and citing the scriptures. The Cistercians believed a monastery should be self-sufficient and lived by the fruit of their own labour. As such, manual labour was a proper activity for a monk and they spent their days alternating between working the land and quiet contemplation.[62] This balance between physical and mental activity would create an environment of peace and facilitate finding a personal path to God.

[59] "Nos cistercienses, primi huius ecclesiae fundatores, successoribus nostris stilo praesenti notificamus: quam canonice, quanta auctoritate, a quibus etiam personis, quibus temporibus, coenobium et tenor vitae illorum exordium sumpserit; ut huius rei propalata sincera veritate, tenacius et locum et observantiam sanctae regulae in eo a nobis per Dei gratiam utcumque inchoatam ament, pro nobisque, qui pondus diei et aestus indefesse sustinuimus, orent, in arta et angusta via quam regula demonstrat, usque ad exhalationem spiritus desudent, quatinus deposita carnis sarcina, in requie sempiterna feliciter pausent."
Prologue of the *Exordium Parvum*, procured from http://www.ocso.org/resources/foundational-text/exordium-parvum/ at 22/05/2017.

[60] C. Stercal, 'Cistercian Origins', in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 11- 15, 12.

[61] M. Casey, 'The Monastic Art of Lectio Divina', in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 215-222, 215.

[62] C.J. Holdsworth, 'The Blessings of work: the Cistercian view' in: *Studies in Church History* 10, 59-76, 64.

The twelfth century brought with it a desire for relating more directly to religion and Christ, in a way that was closer to human comprehension.[63] People hungered for a simpler spirituality and a more personal connection to God. Fitting into this individualistic tendency present in the twelfth century, Bernard and many other Cistercian authors were advocates of personal religious experience. The experience of God should not be confined exclusively to the realms of the afterlife. Being able to experience it in the present and sharing these personal religious feelings was important. Theology, they seemed to think, can only be the result of an authentic spiritual experience.[64] Contemplation and reflection were, therefore, of great importance. It was in part for this reason that superfluous décor and extravagant ornaments were considered deplorable, as these embellishments would distract one from seeking God. However, there was room for simple, unadorned sculptures and devotional objects as long these would aid one in their divine pursuits.[65]

The notion that one's surroundings were of importance, as discussed in the introduction, surpassed the controversy over monastic art. Judging by the descriptions in the old sources, Cistercian monasteries had arisen in secluded places, far from the "world of evil", as if to symbolise the ideal city, a new world revived through grace: a true paradise.[66] As discussed before, however, many of the monasteries were not so far removed from civilisation as was implied, and their influence easily reached nearby settlements and cities. The Cistercian Order sought to restore monastic life as envisioned by St. Benedict, focusing on self-sufficiency and solitude. Hoping to 'escape' the liturgical demands of, for example, the Cluniac Order of that time, the Cistercian monks set out to cultivate the wilderness or *locus horroris* and find their way to God in the reflection of Paradise they would create.[67] However, complete anchoritism was not possible and, regardless of the countless examples of monks longing for a harsh, secluded existence filled with sacrifice, the monastery life was most likely characterised by stability and serenity.[68] The romantic thought of seeking out and transforming the wilderness remained, and this desire to create new, glorious places of worship is often reflected in the names of the monasteries. The name 'Clairvaux' immediately comes to mind, but there are many others with names that have a similar connection with nature, clarity and seclusion.

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[63] Lackner, *The eleventh-century background of Cîteaux*, xv.

[64] Montanari, 'A sublime alliance', in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 21-30, 21.

[65] E. Freeman, 'Cistercian Nuns and Art in the Middle Ages,' in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 175-186, 176 and 178.

[66] Montanari, 'A sublime alliance', in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 21-30, 22.

[67] Ibidem.

[68] G. Geltner, *Healthscaping in Medieval Europe and the Premodern World* (forthcoming).

Consider for example these names of Cistercian monasteries: Abbaye-aux-Bois, Aiguebelle, Baumgarten, Bellefontaine, Boa Vista, Clairefontaine, Clarté-Dieu, Fountains, Klaarland, Novo Mundo, Novy Dvur, Paraiso, Shuili, and Tre Fontane. This habit of having the names of their monasteries refer to a heavenly paradise of serenity and contemplation is widespread. The choice in names led to some writers assuming these abbeys were located in distant and inaccessible places, while it is more plausible that they refer to their spiritual beauty and solitude instead.[69]

Another reason why the inaccessibility of the Cistercian monasteries is likely to have been exaggerated is a couple of the obligations of the monks as described in the Rule, most importantly the prime obligation to take care of the sick. Living in secluded places, removed from the rest of the world, would make caring for the poor and sick a difficult task. In addition, those who required the help and care of the monks would have no way of reaching them, especially with diseases slowing them down. Within early Christian monastic thinking, illness was considered a kind of trial, sent by God to test human faith or to punish bad behaviour.[70] High levels of medical practice, including the use of secular medical literature, were found in Cistercian monasteries, where care for the physical well-being of monks and outsiders alike was part of the collective obligation of the monastic institution.[71] Most manuscripts were kept and copied in monasteries and the monks had somewhat of a monopoly on natural-scientific knowledge that had been passed on. This included a large amount of medical knowledge, part of which can be assumed to be useful in the infirmaries of the monastery. The knowledge, then, could influence the medical discourse and monks became the most knowledgeable medical practitioners from the seventh to the twelfth centuries.[72] Cistercian monasteries, arising in the early twelfth century, also became part of this tradition. There is no doubt an infirmary with a trained infirmarian was a normal part of a Cistercian monastery.[73] On top of that, an interest in medicine and medical theory was not necessarily deplorable. The contents of monastic libraries reflect this: Bell provides us with a

[69] Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 120.

[70] W. Tormey, 'Treating the Condition of 'Evil' in the Anglo-Saxon Herbals,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 88-113, 110.

[71] Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order*, 58.

[72] B.L. Grigsby, *Pestilence in Medieval and Early Moderns English Literature* (New York 2004), 29; Geltner, *Healthscaping in Medieval Europe and the Premodern World* (forthcoming).

[73] A. Classen, 'Introduction: Bathing, Health Care, Medicine, and Water in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature.* 1-87, 18.

description of a wide variety of texts, a mixture of highly academic treatises and more practical treatments, available in the libraries of Cistercian monasteries.[74]

In the following chapters, I will discuss and analyse the selected Cistercian sources and the references to health, the *non-naturals*, and nature. Through the way the authors depict and describe nature and its influence, I hope to gain insight into the paradoxical relationship between the *locus horroris* and the *locus amoenus*.

[74] D.N. Bell, 'The English Cistercians and the Practice of Medicine' in: *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 40 (1989), 139-174, 153-159.

The six *non-naturals* in Cistercian sources

> *"Do not doctors of medicine hold that part of the work of healing depends on a right choice in the taking of food, what to take first, what next, and the amount of each kind to be eaten? For although it is clear that all the foods God made are good, if you fail to take the right amount in due order, you obviously take them to the detriment of your health."*[75]
>
> Bernard of Clairvaux

Above fragment from Bernard's *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* gives a rather straightforward look at the *non-naturals*. Health and well-being was, in part, dependent on things like diet, rest, and one's environment. However, moderation and maintaining a salubrious balance was just as, or perhaps even more important, as too much of a good thing could be harmful as well. In any case, the six *non-naturals* were considered to be of great influence on one's health and constitution. In order to be able to analyse the presence of this idea in the selected texts, I have searched the contents of the works for mentions of the senses and references to the six non-naturals. The resulting collection of findings had to be further subdivided into categories, to ensure I could gain insight in which senses were used in what context and with what purpose.

Using the six non-naturals and their corresponding senses to guide me, I have divided my findings into several categories. The first is 'contact with the surrounding air', further divided into the subcategories smell, hearing, and sight. This is followed by the category 'sleep and waking', including the topics of movement and rest as these were closely connected to them. The third category discusses 'things taken into the body', such as food and drink, and the corresponding tastes. Next, the category dealing with 'affections of the mind', which ranges from emotions and memory to social interactions. The last category this paper will cover 'references to Paradise and heavenly gardens'. This category has some overlap with the previous ones, but I consider it worthy of separate mention because of the importance of this imagery in Christianity.

I have omitted one of the earlier described *non-naturals* in these categories: 'those things that are excreted and retained.' The reason for this is simple. My selected sources do not contain any references to these basic bodily functions.[76] Note that the categories above are far

[75] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Commentary on the Song of Songs,* sermon 36, 2.

[76] For a 'refreshing' view on the taboos around excretion and hygiene, see: B.S. Tuten, 'The *Necessitas Naturae* and Monastic Hygiene,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature,* 129-147.

from rigid. Due to the nature of the texts and the overlap between mystical thought, references to religion, and the medical knowledge therein, the findings do not always fit just one category. While I will attempt to substantiate my choices for specific categories properly, some overlap and ambiguity cannot be avoided.

Contact with the surrounding air: hearing, sight, and smell

I have chosen to group the senses hearing, sight, and smell together as they have one important similarity: in ancient medical thought, these were all strongly connected to the surrounding air. As stated before, the sensory impressions were thought to travel through the air as 'forms' or 'virtues' of the thing their originated from. Picked up by the sensory organs, they would impress their properties, good and bad, upon the *pneuma* and either fortify or corrupt it. Hearing, sight, and smell were all considered to rely heavily on the surrounding air for their functions and, therefore, would most easily be influenced. William of St Thierry describes the process as follows:

> "…the exterior air carries the changes in visible colours and the spirit brings the same change into the mind. Every sense experience changes the one experiencing it in some way into that which is sensed or there is no sensation."[77]

This concept has both positive and negative implications. Exposure to good and 'healthy' environments would strengthen the constitution and vitalise body and soul, while 'unhealthy' and corrupt environments would have the opposite effect. The former is especially clear in the text *Description of the Position and Site of the Abbey of Clairvaux*: it describes the environment of the abbey as a secluded paradise where "the goodness of God multiplies remedies, causes the clear air to shine in serenity, the earth to breathe forth fruitfulness, and the sick man himself to inhale through eyes, and ears, and nostrils the delights of colours, of songs, and of odours."[78] This text also illustrates a paradoxical attitude towards these pleasurable surroundings as it reminds the reader that they are taught to despise pleasures because they are injurious and sinful: "…because pleasure is bought with pain, and is injurious, nor can anyone be ignorant of the sad fate of those who yield to it, except those who either have not sinned, or, having sinned, have not the benefit of repentance. May God keep

[77] *The Nature of the Body and the Soul,* 120. A more complete description of how sight affects the *spirit* is given on page 119, whereas smell and hearing are explained on pages 120-121.
[78] *Description of the Position and Site of the Abbey of Clairvaux,* 461.

far from us the pleasure, at the entrance to which Death is placed."[79] When and how exactly the pleasurable environments become harmful remains largely unclear.

Descriptions of harmful situations are more numerous in the sources, as the authors warn against wandering eyes, itching ears and a palate that is never satisfied. Here we again encounter the connection made between the senses, morality and sin: the connection between the bodily senses and their spiritual counterparts. Hearing, sight and smell were seen as a window to sin and vice, as giving in to sensory pleasure makes one vulnerable to sinful behaviour. Hearing gossip or slander seduces one to envy and bitterness, pride and vanity makes one blind to the truth, and intoxicating scents can drive one to maddening lust or gluttony.[80] The soul, darkened and corrupted by these sinful sounds, scents and sights, becomes clouded and is more easily tempted to sin again, as it cannot see the truth anymore and becomes blind to faith.[81]

Sight, smell, and hearing are also frequently used in a religious context, where they serve as a bridge to faith and, ultimately, to God. Consider the phrases 'Word of God' and the 'beatific vision', for example. To this end, St. Bernard describes hearing as the superior sense: it was through the whispers of the snake that humanity was first lured to sin, and a sinner needs to hear God's Word before their eyes can be opened to God's light:

> "The reason for this I think is that faith comes by hearing: as long as she walks by faith and not by sight she must put more reliance on the ear than on the eye. It is pointless for her to strain toward this vision with eyes that the faith has not yet purified, since it has been promised as a reward to those alone who are clean of heart. It is written "By faith he cleanses men's hearts." Therefore, since faith comes by hearing, and through faith the power of vision is clarified, it is but right to concentrate on adorning her ears, because reason here tells us that hearing is a preparation for seeing." [82]

Even in those who have heard God's call the call of temptation remains, and they need to learn to differentiate between God's Word and the thoughts of the heart. The latter are said to

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[79] *Description of the abbey of Clairvaux,* 466.

[80] "Although the stomach proclaims itself filled by repeated belching, curiosity is not yet satisfied. But while the eyes are enticed by the colours and the palate by the taste, the unfortunate stomach – which neither sees the colours nor is allured by the tastes – is forced to receive it all and, having been smothered, is more overwhelmed than refreshed." *Apologia,* 98. See M. Veldhuizen, *Sins of the Tongue in the Medieval West. Sinful, Unethical, and Criminal Words in Middle Dutch (1300-1550)* (Turnhout 2017) for an extensive and interesting review of the dangers of speech for both body and soul.

[81] "For as our bodily sight is hindered, either by a humour in the eye itself or by some particle or dust from without, so is our spiritual vision disturbed, sometimes by the lures of our own flesh, sometimes by worldly curiosity and ambition. In either case, it is sin alone which dulls and confuses clear vision, nor is anything else found to stand between the eye and the light, between God and man." *De Conversione,* 45.

[82] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 41, 2.

closely resemble words, making it easy for humankind to mistake them for pure words of the Lord.[83]

William of St Thierry, however, considers sight to be the most noble sense, as the eyes are "placed in front of the seat of reason, and closest to it, as the sense most like it in power and most necessary for studying those things which are around and beneath it."[84] Sight would come from the eye's likeness to God's light, which enabled it to gaze upon His Creation and learn to understand it. When the eye is troubled, or 'darkened by sin', it loses this likeness and its ability to see properly. When the eye is enlightened through faith, however, it sees more and more clearly. There are similar statements regarding the sense of smell; pleasant scents emanate from God and from blessed objects, and the odour of holiness and virtue is said to sweeten the Church. Qualities of a good soul, such as contrition, devotion, and piety, are referred to as 'perfumes', which pleasant odours "temper the stench of rotten flesh".[85] They are said to smell of flowers, fresh gardens, and fruits. Bad qualities or vice have their own odour. These are not necessarily connected to 'bad' smells, as they are described as "maddening" and "intoxicating", yet the connection between repulsive scents and sin is present in the sources.[86]

Sleep and waking, movement and rest

This rather broad category of sleep, waking, movement, and rest contains all forms of action or the lack thereof. How and when people slept, their activities, how much leisure time they had, and, most importantly, the environments in which all of this took place were considered to have a large influence on one's wellbeing and overall health. The ideals and rules regarding the activities of the monks were of great importance within the Cistercian Order. Based on Genesis 3:19 *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"*, manual labour was considered a proper activity. The monks could live by the fruits of their own labour, working hard so they might also be able to provide for others, while having ample time to reflect on God and pray.[87] The work kept their hands busy but their minds free, ensuring the

[83] *Commentary on the Song of Songs,* sermon 32, 5: "So when we yield our hearts to wicked thoughts, the thoughts are our own; if we think on good things, it is God's word. Our hearts produce the evil thoughts, they listen for those that are good."

[84] *The Nature of the Body and the Soul*, 118.

[85] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 12, 3: "Every action bore its own aroma. Even his own conscience was filled with accumulating perfumes, so that pleasant odours from within tempered the stench of his rotting flesh."

[86] *De Conversione,* 20-21: The scents are, for example, referred to as "sulphorous vapours of evil".

[87] Holdsworth, 'The blessings of work: the Cistercian view', 64-65.

monks alternated between hard work and contemplation. According to Cistercian thought, his rhythm helped their souls to move closer to God. Besides that, exercise was an important part of the *regimen* to stay healthy. Its main function was to augment and redistribute the body's heat, but it also strengthened the body itself, encouraged plenty of rest, and fortified emotional wellbeing.[88]

The connection of rest and activity to the other senses and the *non-naturals* is manifold. Sleep itself was said to arise from a "subtle and sweet vapour", a by-product of our digestion, which would influence the brain and put it to rest.[89] Aside from an explanation for the overwhelming tiredness that follows a good meal, this description also implies that our food affects our brain and our rest. The food that is consumed affects this vapour and, therefore, our mental state and sleep. Herbal remedies were also considered to have an influence on the quality of rest. Wood betony, for example, was thought to ward off frightful nightmares and protect one from terrifying visions.[90] Sleep itself is described as a window to God, but also as corruptible by the Devil and sin when not properly controlled:

> "How often, for example, does he (the Devil) not persuade a monk to anticipate the hour of rising, and mock at him as he sleeps in choir while his brothers pray! How often does he not suggest that fasts be prolonged, until a man is so weak that he is useless for the service of God! How often, in envy of a man's fervor in community life, does he not persuade him to live as a hermit in order to achieve greater perfection, until the unhappy man finally discovers how true that saying is which he had read to no purpose: "Woe to him who is alone, for when he falls he has none to lift him up!" How often has he not inspired a man to work harder than necessary at manual labour, until exhaustion makes him unfit for the other regular observances! How many has he not won over to indiscreet indulgence in physical exercises which the Apostle considers of little value, and sapped their spiritual stamina!"[91]

The key to controlling it and reaching God is contemplation, good habits, and virtue; only then will the soul enjoy sleep and rest "in the midst of the goods that He has bestowed on her."[92] The notion that sleep and rest could and should be controlled diverged from older

[88] Rawcliffe, *Mental Illness and Mental Health in the Late Medieval Monastery*, 12.

[89] *The Nature of the Body and the Soul*, 109.

[90] W. Tormey, 'Treating the Condition of 'Evil' in the Anglo-Saxon Herbals,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 88-113, 97.

[91] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 33, 10.

[92] *De Diligendo Deo*, 19-20.

ideas, such as the thought of Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 298 – 373), who believed sleep separated the will from the body.[93]

One's humanity is only complete, so claim the sources, if there is room for rest and contemplation; who chooses not to give themselves to contemplation or who cannot do so is "the worst of all slaves", ruled by iniquity.[94] God himself supports this balance of work and leisure, as his rivers "relieves them of the heaviest part of their labour. And if it is permitted to them to mix jokes with serious work, it relieves the sadness of their sins."[95] According to Bernard, consideration and contemplation are "soul's true unerring intuition", an "unhesitating apprehension of truth."[96] He considers it the most influential as it is, in his eyes, the strongest tool humanity has to control and utilise the senses, to regulate our lives, and to learn of the world and the afterlife.[97]

It is important to take note of this emphasis on balance of work and leisure, of action and contemplation, because it is this concept of balance, of moderation, and of mindful control, that forms a significant part of the foundation of St. Bernard's work. The influence of the *non-naturals* on body and soul could pose a real danger to one's health and spiritual wellbeing, but with contemplation and consideration, one could control this impact at least to some degree.[98] In his own words:

> "…herein you may observe a delightfully harmonious connection between the virtues, and their dependence one upon another. It is consideration, too, which sits as it were umpire of the strife between our pleasures and necessities, settles the boundaries on either side, allotting and allowing to the latter what is sufficient, taking from the former what is excessive."[99]

[93] Tuten, 'The *Necessitas Naturae* and Monastic Hygiene,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 129-147, 141.

[94] *De Consideratione,* 21.

[95] *Description of Clairvaux,* 462.

[96] *De Consideratione*, 41.

[97] "Is anything, in all respects, so influential as consideration? […] it purifies the very fountain, that is the mind, from which it springs. Then it governs the affections, directs our actions, corrects excesses, softens the manners, adorns and regulates the life, and, lastly, bestows the knowledge of things divine and human alike." *De Consideratione,* 26.

[98] Tuten, 'The *Necessitas Naturae* and Monastic Hygiene,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 129-147, 141.

[99] *De Consideratione*, 27.

Things taken into the body, such as food and drink, and the corresponding tastes

As mentioned before, diet was thought to have a powerful effect on health and constitution. Food and drink formed the basis for the four humours that nourished and supported the body:

> "Any food, from whatever source it is taken, is made up of the four elements, as we have indicated is the case with the body. But in how many ways and what dissimilar ways, in regards to hotness and coldness, dryness and wetness, the elements can be in things that can be eaten,"[100]

Eating the 'wrong' foods or inappropriate amounts would shake the very foundation of bodily health, and would have a pronounced effect on how the body could cope with the influence of the other non-naturals. Even an excess of water was deemed dangerous as it was said to "intoxicate the spirit, causing phantasies in dreams, and plague the body with troubles, namely, throbbing of the veins, chills in the marrow, heaviness in the forehead, dizziness in the head, sleepiness in the eyes, continual sneezing in the nose."[101]

Taste also played an important role when it came to the *non-naturals*, as it was often tied to the qualities of the food and therefore, the effects it had on the body.[102]

Bernard points out the disparity between what our stomachs and bodies need, and what the limits of our "capacity for pleasure" are.[103] Spurred on by other vice and harmful habits, humankind can easily surpass their bodily needs for food and ignore any notion of moderation.[104] For this reason, Bernard discourages idle chatter during mealtimes, because "just as gullets are feasted with food, so ears are feasted with gossip so engrossing that you know no moderation in eating."[105] Indulging in pleasure and desire, in this case through excessive eating and drinking, would be harmful to the body and the soul, making man similar

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[100] *The Nature of the Body and the Soul*, 106.

[101] Tuten, 'The *Necessitas Naturae* and Monastic Hygiene,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 129-147, 143.

[102] "When the thing to be tasted contacts the tongue, nature causes the tongue to be changed into the nature of the thing tasted. The change affects the nerve, and through it transmits the taste to the mind to be distinguished and judged, and thus we have the sense of taste." *The Nature of the Body and the Soul*, 121-122.

[103] "For the palate, as long it is enticed by novel seasonings, gradually loses its attraction to the familiar and is hungrily restored in its desire by foreign spices as if it had fasted until now. The stomach, as long as it is unfamiliar with [these new seasonings and spices], is overloaded, but variety removes any weariness. […] the limit of necessity is of course passed by, but the capacity for pleasure is not yet exhausted." *Apologia*, 97

[104] Also known as *crapula*. Tuten, 'The *Necessitas Naturae* and Monastic Hygiene,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 129-147, 143-144.

[105] *Apologia*, 97.

to animals.[106] The opposite was also discouraged. Excessive fasting, especially for the wrong reasons, was equally dangerous as it was often done out of misguided pride or a pursuit of admiration:

> "For who can look favourably upon the fasts of men who fast for strife or for contention and smite with impious fist, while in them are found their own wills and their own pleasures?"[107]

The only reason why someone would be exempted from the stern dietary restrictions of the Cistercian monastery was illness. Then they would either be allowed to eat meat while they recovered "to restore the ruins of a body weakened because of illness", or they would be advised to avoid specific foods for a while.[108]

The taste of food and drink played an important role; it was easier to eat too much if the flavours were various and pleasurable because of novel seasonings. These "adultered" flavours would cause man to treat plain, normal food with disdain and, as such, scorn the natural qualities which God had bestowed on these foods. The lust for more and more diverse tastes would lead to overeating, refusal to eat 'normal food', and to healthy men faking illness to sate their desire for meat. Pleasurable food was more treacherous, as were sweet foods and wine.

Besides this, matters like food, hunger, thirst and taste are mentioned excessively in the selected sources. Just as with the other senses discussed so far, there is a strong connection between religion and this bodily function. Adequately referred to as 'the food of the soul', religion is thought to strengthen and nourish the soul in a similar way as food sustains the body. And just as food must be chewed for the body to properly digest it, one must also properly mull over the spiritual matters:

> "As food is sweet to the palate, so does a psalm delight the heart. But the soul that is sincere and wise will not fail to chew the psalm with the teeth as it were of the mind,

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[106] "…souls to whom it brings no shame to feed swine, to share the appetites of swine, and not even then have enough of their sorry fodder" *De Conversione*, 22.

[107] *De Conversione*, 13; "You have no desire to be content with the common life. The regular fast is not enough for you, nor the solemn vigils, nor the rules of the house, nor the amount of food and clothing we have allotted to you. You want to have your own private ways rather than share what is common. In the beginning you entrusted yourselves to our care, why do you take charge of yourselves again? For now you have again for master not me but that self-will by which, on the testimony of your own consciences, you have so often offended God. It is that which urges you not to show pity for nature's needs, not to yield to reason, not to respect the advice or example of the seniors, not to obey us." *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 19, 7.

[108] *Apologia*, 99.

because if he swallows it in a lump, without proper mastication, the palate will be cheated of the delicious flavour, sweeter even than honey that drips from the comb."[109]

In line with this concept, virtues are described as dishes that titillate the palate and the notion of the metaphorical 'hunger for God' is expanded. The sources emphasise the need to indulge this hunger for the 'sweetness of God' and as such, soothe the suffering of our bitter earthly lives.[110] Note again the paradoxical attitude towards pleasurable sensations. Sweet and enjoyable tastes are to be spurned, as they seduce one to overindulge and harm one's health and soul. At the same time, delicious and sweet tastes were strongly connected to virtues and other blessed activities, yet this sweetness would apparently surpass any earthly taste known to man.

Affections of the mind

This category ranges from the influence of social interaction and emotions to those of memory, contemplation and general musings. Negative emotions like anger, grief, and fear were deemed harmful, but positive emotions could also prove dangerous. Excessive elation or lust, for example, were thought to have a considerable effect on the *animal spirit* and, thus, on a person's wellbeing. On top of their own influence, emotions and other affections of the mind were closely tied to other *non-naturals*, like appetite and activity, strengthening their impact on one's health. Like all *non-naturals*, each mental activity was in a sense a potential hazard or a potential remedy. Similarly, the other *non-naturals* would affect the mind; some herbs, for example, would guard a person from 'evil' and insanity.[111]

In the sources, the strong connection between affections of the mind and the other *non-naturals* is hard to disregard. The mind seems to be the 'grey area' where the lines between the soul and the body blur and everything comes together. Bernard believes the soul to be nothing more than a person's reason, memory and will; with reason and will, humanity should control the urge to sin and resist temptation:

"…as there is the memory which is befouled, so there is the will which befouls. In a word, the soul itself in its entirety is nothing else than reason, memory and will. But now, as things are, the resourceless reason is found to be blind in that it has not hitherto seen all this; to be altogether feeble in that even what it does recognise it does not

[109] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 7, 5.

[110] "Let us mix honey with our absinthe, it is more easily drunk when sweetened, and what bitterness it may still retain will be wholesome." *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 11, 2.

[111] Tormey, 'Treating the Condition of 'Evil' in the Anglo-Saxon Herbals,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 88-113, 97.

possess the strength to correct. The memory too is as utterly filthy as it is fetid; and the weak will is running all over with horrible ulcers. And, to leave out nothing which belongs to the man, the very body is rebellious, and every single member is a separate window by which death enters into the soul, and incessantly the confusion grows worse."[112]

When they cannot resist this temptation, the memory becomes tainted and the whole soul suffers and slowly degenerates, and becomes more susceptible to vice.[113] With this in mind, it seems fitting that Bernard holds our will in such high regard. It is our strongest tool against the corruption of our souls and our bodies, as he states:

"…the will is under compulsion (by temptation) and deprived of its freedom. But the truth is that however a man may be pressed by temptation, whether from within or from without, his will, so far as concerneth choice, will be always free; in as much as, in spite of everything, it will be free to decide in the matter of its own consent."[114]

Without this will, the mind is absent and remains unaware of the damage that is being done to soul and body through its sinful ways.[115] Bernard also refers to this as a 'hard heart', and as it has lost every connection to purity, it has become less than human and insensitive to virtue.[116] The words "heart", "mind", and "soul" appear to become interchangeable when he talks of this state; an absent mind is apparently similar, or at least connected to, a hard heart or a degenerate soul. Bernard creates tension between the healthy soul and its innate beauty through its creation by God, and the soul that has lost this purity and has become 'estranged' from God.[117]

To avoid this hardening and alienating of the heart and numbing of the soul, emotions should be controlled by the will and never be allowed to overtake us. Especially the emotions born from vice such as envy, pride, or wrath are dangerous. While "every sin has its origin in pride", the sources speak lengthily of the effects of envy, gluttony, lust, wrath, greed, and

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[112] *De Conversione,* 17.

[113] "In contrast, the unhappy and wretched soul, if it may indeed be called a soul, which kills itself and is in itself dead, makes a catabathmon, that is, a descent to a lower place. Indeed, not a descent but a ruin, so that "what is filthy may become filthier still". It does and suffers all that is contrary, separated from the life of God." *The Nature of the Body and the Soul,* 151.

[114] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio,* 60.

[115] "The absent mind indeed is not aware of inward losses, because it itself is not at home, but in the belly or perhaps lower than the belly. […]What wonder then if the soul does not at all perceive its own wound, seeing that, forgetful of itself and wholly absent from itself, it has gone away into a far country?" *De Conversione*, 9.

[116] *De Consideratione,* 17.

[117] P.-A. Burton, '"Deformed Beauty" or "Beautiful Deformity": The Aesthetics of the Cross as a mystical ethic of beauty in Bernard of Clairvaux,' in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts,* 31-34, 32.

sloth.[118] A lack of control over one's emotions is ascribed to usually arise from recent conversion to monastic life, or a failure to give up on vice regardless of when they were converted. "Both of these conditions humiliate, depress, and agitate the mind, since either because of its lukewarmness or because of the recentness it perceives the old passions of the soul to be still alive and it is forced to concentrate on cutting out from the garden of the heart the briers of sinful habits and the nettles of evil desires."[119]

According to the sources, the remedy against these dangerous afflictions of the mind, whether they originate in emotions, sense perception, or memory, is religion. Some medical practitioners regarded confession as an effective treatment for certain conditions as, so they thought, emotions like anger, fear and anxiety had a debilitating effect on the *animal spirit* and, therefore, the mind.[120] It was also considered a necessary part in the remedies against poisons, such as snake bites. The herbal treatments for these were concluded by reciting specific prayers.[121] Similarly, Bernard ascribed tremendous power to religion as he believed it able to strengthen humankind's resolve and save them from anything their earthly existence may challenge them with.[122] If they carry it close to their heart, "the name of Jesus furnishes the power to correct your evil actions; to supply what is wanting to imperfect ones; in this name your affections find a guard against corruption, or if corrupted, a power that will make them whole again."[123] Besides this, moderation and some diversity of activities prevented boredom, inertia and the emotional exhaustion that was a result of the spiritual discipline the monks required.

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[118] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 17, 6. For example, Bernard dedicates a large portion of sermon 24 to describing the effects and dangers of envy.

[119] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 10, 9; Bernard uses the word 'lukewarm' to describe those who only commit half-heartedly to God's path, and thus cannot control their emotions and desires.

[120] Rawcliffe, *Mental Illness and Mental Health in the Late Medieval Monastery*, 11.

[121] Tormey, 'Treating the Condition of 'Evil' in the Anglo-Saxon Herbals,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 88-113, 99.

[122] "Does one of us feel sad? Let the name of Jesus come into his heart, from there let it spring to his mouth, so that shining like the dawn it may dispel all darkness and make a cloudless sky. Does someone fall into sin? Does his despair even urge him to suicide? Let him but invoke this life-giving name and his will to live will be at once renewed. The hardness of heart that is our common experience, the apathy bred of indolence, bitterness of mind, repugnance for the things of the spirit -- have they ever failed to yield in presence of that saving name? The tears damned up by the barrier of our pride -- how have they not burst forth again with sweeter abundance at the thought of Jesus' name? And where is the man, who, terrified and trembling before impending peril, has not been suddenly filled with courage and rid of fear by calling on the strength of that name? Where is the man who, tossed on the rolling seas of doubt, did not quickly find certitude by recourse to the clarity of Jesus' name? Was ever a man so discouraged, so beaten down by afflictions, to whom the sound of this name did not bring new resolve? In short, for all the ills and disorders to which flesh is heir, this name is medicine." *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 15, 6.

[123] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 15, 7.

References to Paradise and heavenly gardens

This last category covers references made to Paradise and heavenly gardens in the sources. Perhaps the inclusion of this category requires further explanation, as it is not a necessary part of the six non-naturals. However, it does overlap considerably with the other categories, as the environment of the garden would radiate salubrious qualities that the senses could pick up. As I have mentioned before, ancient thought on health and environment became connected to the story of Genesis and the Garden of Eden, where man had enjoyed a perfect life, in perfect health, in the perfect environment. This idea of the Garden as a flawless and 'healthy' environment was firmly rooted in ancient notions on the importance of environment on man's constitution and life. It suggested that although man could not regain entrance to the Garden of Eden and its perfectly balanced environment, it was still possible to reap some of the environmental benefits from places that were similar to it. Besides offering a soothing place for mediation or exercise, gardens filled with trees and flowers and calming riverbanks were believed to fortify the constitution and general wellbeing.[124] This idea proved quite tenacious and it became a recurring image in Christian sources on bodily and spiritual health. As such, I found it necessary to include this category into my analysis.

The beneficial effects of nature are most clearly described in the *Description of the Site and Position of the Abbey of Clairvaux*; the text is filled with examples of the beneficial effects ascribed to these surroundings. Through connecting the environment to the *Song of Songs*, the author talks at length about the location of the Abbey and the arrangement of trees, flowers and water within the enclosure.[125] The proximity of the numerous and fertile trees, so he writes, "…is no slight alleviation of the infirmities of the brethren, to whom the orchard offers a vast space for walking, and gives a pleasant shade against the heat of the sun."[126] The river Aube, which feeds the streams and fountains within the enclosure, "is a pleasing sight afforded to the eyes of the sick brethren when they do to sit on the verdant bank of a pool filled with pure and running water."[127] Besides its soothing presence and the calming sounds it produces, the water also alleviates the labour of the monks, for example by turning the mill, allowing them to mix their serious work with some laughter and conversation, which would benefit the mind. Monasteries like Clairvaux could help with healing through combining

[124] Rawcliffe, *Mental Illness and Mental Health in the Late Medieval Monastery*, 15.

[125] J.L. Smith, 'Caring for the Body and Soul with Water: Guerric of Igny's *Fourth Sermon on the Epiphany*, Godfrey of Saint-Victor's *Fons Philosophiae*, and Peter of Celle's Letters,' in: A. Classen, (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 148-170, 151.

[126] *Description of Clairvaux*, 461.

[127] Ibidem.

physical facilities and spiritual cleansing as the nature and water present in the material landscape would nourish the soul.[128]

Bernard also writes about the wonder and lustre of nature; it is God's Creation and blessing.[129] He uses the images of nature and the heavenly garden to describe the mind, and to illustrate the influence of God on earth and on humankind. For example, he describes history as a garden with three divisions: creation, reconciliation and renewal.[130] It is not surprising that he would use such comparisons, as this type of imagery is frequently found in the Bible. There are also plenty of references to biblical texts that include similar imagery in the sources. The soul, or heart, of a pure Christian is described as the inner garden or paradise where one can find and contact God. In this garden, their virtues are materialised into flowers, divine perfumes, and sweet fruits that "attracts the visits of the Beloved."[131] This 'Beloved' is also called the 'Bridegroom', and is a reference to God or divine visitation. The pure soul is compared to a bride, longing for her bridegroom, luring him to her with the delights stored in her garden:

> "The heavenly Bridegroom, drawn by the odour, delights to come into the chamber of the heart, when He finds it decked with fruits and perfumed with flowers. […] His body, down in death, has blossomed in the resurrection, and after His likeness, our plains and valleys, which were dry and bare, or frozen, are new born to life and heat. The freshness of these flowers, the perfection of the fruits, and the beauty of this garden exhaling such exquisite perfume, are pleasing also to the Father of Him who has made all things new;"[132]

Similar to this inner garden, the pure soul is also described as a pure fountain or spring and water as a way of cleaning both body and soul.[133] Besides the mystical image of fountains and rivers, water played an essential role in wellness and preventative medicine in the form of

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[128] Smith, 'Caring for the Body and Soul with Water' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 148-170, 150-151.

[129] So lift up your eyes round about and see if the mountains were not covered with its shade, the cedars of God with its branches; if its tendrils did not extend to the sea and its offshoots all the way to the river. No matter for wonder this: it is God's building, God's farm. He waters it, he propagates it, prunes and cleanses it that it may bear more fruit. When did he ever deprive of his care and labour that which his right hand planted? *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 30, 3.

[130] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 23, 4.

[131] *De Diligendo Deo*, 13.

[132] Ibidem, 14-15.

[133] Montanari, 'A Sublime Alliance,' in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 21-40, 22; A. Classen, 'Introduction: Bathing, Health Care, Medicine, and Water in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 1-87, 15-16.

herbal waters, a tool for washing both the body and the spirit, and other applications.[134] The same image is used at times to refer to God's blessings as well, as water symbolises both life (through baptism) and death (sinfulness) in Christian theology.[135] Much of the imagery is tied to several analogies. The result is a complex collection of gardens, flowers, scents and fountains, each of which referring to a different aspect of humankind, the soul, or God himself.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have given an overview of the different ways in which the sources reference sensory perception and the *non-naturals*. Although it is not feasible to describe all the mentions of hearing, sight, rest and nature, it is clear there is much diversity on how the authors deal with these topics. We have observed that in the sources there is a distinct connection between the senses, the *non-naturals*, and the soul. Ranging from descriptions of how the senses 'work' to biblical metaphors of God's Word and heavenly environments, these *non-naturals* had an effect on one's health, both physically and spiritually.

Given the primacy of hearing and sight in the sources, as described by both Bernard and William of St Thierry, we would expect a large amount of the references to sensory perceptions to be either visual or aural in nature. However, this does not seem to be the case. Although both these senses get plenty of attention, the selected sources make more frequent mentions of smells and scents than of either hearing or sight. This apparent focus on gustatory experience may be explained in part by the inclusion of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. In this source, Bernard analyses and comments extensively upon the biblical Song of Solomon, or the Canticles, and its implications. This results in lengthy discourses on the 'perfumes' of virtue and discussion on the analogies of humanity's 'inner garden', which may explain the amount of references to scent and smell. The sense of touch receives the least amount of attention in the selected sources. This scarcity may be explained by the fact that these sources, while full of sensory perception and their influences, are still of a theological nature. There are few biblical mentions of touch being essential to knowing God and within these analogies, touch was a less flexible sense than sight, hearing or taste.

[134] J.E. Jost, 'The Ambiguous Effect of Water and Oil in Middle English Romance: Acknowledged and Ignored,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 331-356, 331; Gordon, '*Mens sana in Corpore Sanus*' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 424-440, 424.

[135] A. Classen, 'Introduction: Bathing, Health Care, Medicine, and Water in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age,' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 1-87, 11.

The statements about medicine and health are various and diverse throughout most of the selected sources. They range from declaring the importance of a balanced lifestyle to warnings against bodily desires and vice. When the medical knowledge is not used in a literal sense, the statements are used to illustrate a point the author tries to make, to strengthen an argument, to draw parallels, or simply to gain credibility or 'show off'. They are often heavily dependent on the ancient medical thought I have described above, as numerous references are made to specific ancient texts, authors and concepts. Names like Hippocrates and Constantine the African are mentioned, and concepts as *catabathmon* and *eucrasia* are used freely. This is especially the case in the source by William of St Thierry, who admits to rely strongly on the ancient texts to support his view of man and the soul. The other sources I have analysed do not use the specific terms as frequently, or not at all, but often make reference to them without explicitly naming them. They assume the reader to be familiar with the medical knowledge and expand on it with either logic or analogy, but without offering much of an explanation. There is, however, room for discussion under which circumstances certain remedies should be used. "Different illnesses call for different remedies, stronger illnesses for stronger remedies," as the *Apologia* states; a certain amount of common sense and logic needs to be used when it comes to medicine.[136] A remedy that cures one person could harm another. The nature of the disease and the environment of the ill plays a large role in determining what remedy is needed in that specific situation.

It is important to realise that the concept of bodily health in the sources is frequently connected to notions of morality:

> "Let all others heed the warning: he who knows what he ought to do and fails to do it, commits sin; just as food eaten but not digested is injurious to one's health. Food that is badly cooked and indigestible induces physical disorders and damages the body instead of nourishing it. In the same way if a glut of knowledge stuffed in the memory, that stomach of the mind, has not been cooked on the fire of love, and transfused and digested by certain skills of the soul, its habits and actions - since, as life and conduct bear witness, the mind is rendered good through its knowledge of good— will not that knowledge be reckoned sinful, like the food that produces irregular and harmful humours?" [137]

[136] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia*, 87-88.

[137] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 36, 4.

If the humours and the *non-naturals* affected one's personality and health, and fuelled the *spirits* present in the body, in the Cistercian sources this concept is taken one step further; not just a person's personality and bodily health are affected by their environment, but their soul as well. Bernard describes this as follows:

> "For, however quickly passed all the prurience of sinful flesh, however soon ended all voluptuous charm, it impressed the thoughts of its bitterness upon the memory; it left its foul traces. Forsooth into that depository, as into some cesspit, all the abomination, all the filth has run."[138]

As Bernard believes the soul to be nothing more than a person's reason, memory and will, this impression of bitterness upon the memory is equal to the corruption of the soul.[139] Naturally, contamination of the soul by the body is closely related to the contamination of the soul through sin and vice. Many sins have a physical component or are expressed through a function of the body. Even the vices that are expressed solely in the mind, such as pride and jealousy, have a physical element as the *animal spirit* that regulates the mind is an extension of the same humours that vitalise the body. Therefore, in concordance with Christian thought, the soul is susceptible to corruption from both physical and mental influences. "For our deeds do not, as they seem to, pass away; but every deed done in time is sown the seed of a harvest reaped in eternity."[140]

According to the sources, the body is not just able to corrupt the soul, but also limits it and 'weighs it down'.[141] The one who ignores the demands the body makes naturally risks losing their health or their life. Too strong a focus on bodily desire, however, was just as harmful for both body and soul. Cistercian sources stress the importance of balance in these matters; "The Apostle […] teaches us that the care of our flesh is not perfected in the gratification of its desires. […] it neither cuts off what is necessary, nor goes beyond it."[142] Just as the bodily humours require a certain balance to retain health, a similar balance keeps mind and soul strong and free of corruption. Indulging the senses and pandering to bodily pleasure would disrupt this balance, as it opens body and soul to vice and corruption.

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[138] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Conversione,* 6.

[139] "In a word, the soul itself in its entirety is nothing else than reason, memory and will." Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Conversione,* 17.

[140] *De Conversione,* 24.

[141] "In this life, the heart is obliged to take some thought of the body, the mind to see that its health and powers are kept unimpaired; and I think that it is impossible, so long as our energies as thus divided, to rest wholly in God and in the contemplation of Him," Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Diligendo Deo,* 45.

[142] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Consideratione,* 28.

> "For a sense is one of the five invisible bridges between the invisible incorporeal and the visible corporeal, all in the same body. The soul is invisible and incorporeal, yet wondrously it does something invisible and corporeal about the visible body; it is sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. For sight is one thing, the eye another; hearing one thing, the ear another, and so for the rest."[143]

This connection between the individual senses and the soul will be elaborated upon in the appropriate categories later in this chapter.

The last aspect of the references to the *non-naturals* I wish to discuss is the spiritual and medical language used in the sources. Due to the connection drawn between bodily health and the health of the soul, the use of medical vocabulary in a religious context seems fitting. If, for example, an excess of food can harm the soul, then comparing the corruption of the soul by sin to a 'festering wound' is not far behind.[144] The word 'corruption' was used for both body and soul, and was closely related to what we would nowadays call infection.[145] It was defined as imbalance that undermines wellbeing; the connection to the *non-naturals* as described here is clear. Tending to such a spiritual wound required cleansing the soul and ensuring no further harm could come to it; one had to control their behaviour, their minds, but also their environment. We can find similar use of medical vocabulary in various religious remarks. God or Christ is described as healer, capable of saving our souls from corruption and 'death', and the Christian religion is defined as medicine:

> "Perhaps you think the Word of God is not a medicine? Surely it is, a medicine strong and pungent, testing the mind and the heart. The Word of God is something alive and active. It cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely. It can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or the joints from the marrow: it can judge the secret thoughts."[146]

Not just the Word of God, but simply his name could bestow blessings of health upon those who uttered it and embraced it as remedy.[147] Besides this, thought of God and other

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[143] William of St Thierry, *Nature of the Body and the Soul*, 140.

[144] For example: *De Consideratione*, 14-15.

[145] Gordon, '*Mens sana in Corpore Sanus*' in: A. Classen (ed.), *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, 424-440, 428.

[146] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 3, 2.

[147] "Again, it is a medicine. Does one of us feel sad? Let the name of Jesus come into his heart, from there let it spring to his mouth, so that shining like the dawn it may dispel all darkness and make a cloudless sky. Does someone fall into sin? Does his despair even urge him to suicide? Let him but invoke this life-giving name and his will to live will be at once renewed. The hardness of heart that is our common experience, the apathy bred of indolence, bitterness of mind, repugnance for the things of the spirit -- have they ever failed to yield in presence of that saving name? The tears damned up by the barrier of our pride -- how have they not burst forth again with

religious experiences were frequently described as an expression of the senses. For example, people experienced a 'hunger' or 'thirst' for God, and as their spiritual belief deepened they saw how "the interior sight of the soul is brightened by prudence, darkened by folly; its hearing is offended by fallacy, soothed by truth. Equity smells sweet to the rational soul, iniquity and uncleanness stink. It grown thin on vanity, fattens on virtue."[148]

There are countless examples of this and similar attitudes in the Cistercian sources. As describing every mention of this thought goes beyond the scope of this thesis, a summary will have to suffice. Besides the literal use of medical knowledge and terminology, references to medicine are used to strengthen arguments, draw parallels between body and soul, and to illustrate man's connection to God. This remarkable use of the *non-naturals* in a more spiritual sense also expanded the impact the senses and the environment had on man; not just his bodily health was at stake, but that of his eternal soul as well. Fuelled by sin as a 'humour of evil', the mind would get diseased and inflamed in the same way the bodily humours affected physical health. This notion of the senses being connected to vice and the corruption of the soul will be explored further in the following paragraphs, as I delve further into the mentions of the *non-naturals* and their corresponding senses.

The next chapter will further explore the analogies in the sources in their diverse forms. By diving deeper into their wording and implications, it aims to clarify what the authors meant with these images and how they are connected to the *non-naturals.* This is done by categorising the mentions of health and the *non-naturals* by their author's intent and the 'originality' of the imagery used.

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sweeter abundance at the thought of Jesus' name? And where is the man, who, terrified and trembling before impending peril, has not been suddenly filled with courage and rid of fear by calling on the strength of that name? Where is the man who, tossed on the rolling seas of doubt, did not quickly find certitude by recourse to the clarity of Jesus' name? Was ever a man so discouraged, so beaten down by afflictions, to whom the sound of this name did not bring new resolve? In short, for all the ills and disorders to which flesh is heir, this name is medicine. Hidden as in a vase, in this name of Jesus, you, my soul, possess a salutary remedy against which no spiritual illness will be proof. Carry it always close to your heart, always in your hand, and so ensure that all your affections, all your actions, are directed to Jesus." *Commentary on the Song of Songs,* sermon 15, 6-7.

[148] *The Nature of the Body and the Soul,* 140-141; "The thought of God is sweet to those who sigh after Him, and with every breath recall His presence; but, far from appeasing their hunger for Him, it increases it." *De Diligendo Deo,* 17.

Uncovering the meaning: spiritual allegories and biblical references

"This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.'"

Matthew 13:13

The aim of the previous chapter was to show how the *non-naturals* and references to the senses are used in the sources. We have seen how activity, emotions, diet and sensory perception were thought to influence one's health, wellbeing and soul. This chapter will delve further into the sources and the imagery used by the authors, as it is the wording and context of these metaphors which can give us insight in the thought they were built upon. By uncovering this, I hope to add a new dimension to our understanding of the Cistercian views on nature and the senses, and expand our insight into why it could be both *locus horroris* and *locus amoenus*.

To explore the imagery properly, a short introduction into spiritual allegories is necessary.

Spiritual allegories

"This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.'"[149] This Bible verse describes two concepts of great importance to this paper. Firstly, it refers to the senses: both vision and hearing are mentioned and are linked to the Christian faith. Secondly, this verse explains the use of parables and allegory to convey a deeper meaning to those familiar with the hidden message. That last part is especially important, as it makes the knowledge the exclusive property of those worthy to understand, only offering the complete magnitude of the allegory to those who are fit by virtue of their devotion.[150] As a consequence, parables and allegories can often be found in religious texts. Spiritual insight and divine knowledge would be transmitted through the allegorical passages, available to all but only completely comprehensible to those who believed. In the twelfth century, there was a distinct awareness of the friction between the reality of spiritual life and its expressive requirements: religious experience and the necessary language to express it.[151] Theological modalities of expression could not simply be translated into everyday language. The theological language was, thus, an essentially metaphorical one,

[149] Matthew 13:13.

[150] S.C. Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Toronto 2012), 8.

[151] Montanari, 'A sublime alliance', in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 21-30, 21.

in which God has become 'visible' and 'imaginable', but only to those familiar with the imagery used.

This knowledge is vital to understanding the language used in the Cistercian sources. Within the monasteries a more emotional understanding of religion emerged, as opposed to the 'scientific' form taught in the budding universities.[152] The language used in these sources, then, is inspired by the Bible and fitted into a more personal, emotional rhetoric without dissolving into fantasy.[153] While some of the sources have more abundant and colourful imagery than others, this language is present throughout all the texts to some extent.

When we consider the sources and the way they refer to the *non-naturals*, three categories can be distinguished. The first would be the references to the *non-naturals* in a literal sense, when the authors discuss their impact and influences on the body and soul in a direct, unembellished manner. A second category is formed by those references that are strongly influenced by biblical texts and imagery, such as mentions of the 'Bridegroom' and the inner garden in one's heart. This imagery is identical or closely tied to the biblical versions and is, at most, further expanded upon by the author to explain or build upon these metaphors. The third category contains more 'original' allegories, created or used by the authors to illustrate their arguments, strengthen their texts and draw parallels.[154] It is this last category that provides us with the most insight in the ways that thought on the *non-naturals* was adapted and appropriated, as it allowed authors to describe their own views and ideas on the subject. This freedom was aptly used by Bernard to shape and develop his own mysticism; this is where we will find the twelfth-century Cistercian views on health and the *non-naturals*.

Literal references

The first two categories, however, should not be ignored. These can provide us with a context and a guide for interpreting the more original references. The first category, containing the most literal references, gives little opportunity for analysis, as its intended meaning is not obscured. These mentions of the *non-naturals* are almost non-existent in Bernard's work, as he spends little time explaining how the senses work. Even his

[152] Biffi, 'Bernard of Clairvaux and the Experience of Mystery', in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 17-20, 19.

[153] Ibidem.

[154] By considering them more original, I simply refer to these metaphors as diverging from the imagery found in the Bible. This does not mean the authors themselves have created them, or that they have not been used before by other sources. It simply serves as a distinction between this more recently created imagery and the older biblical metaphors.

descriptions of the dangers that threaten those who indulge their senses contain subtle imagery and metaphors:

> "…hence it is that the belly swells and grows fat, nay, rather is impregnated by destruction, so that, while the bones can with difficulty sustain the weight of the flesh, various diseases are engendered."[155]

For the truly literal mentions of the *non-naturals*, we have to look at the other authors. William of St Thierry's work contains the most literal discussions on the senses, as he aims to describe the workings of the body and soul. He draws heavily upon ancient sources, which is reflected in his language:

> "Three powers share in directing the body. A power is an operative habit residing in an organ which enables it to carry out its proper function. There is the natural power in the liver, the spiritual power in the heart and the animal power in the brain. All the functions of the body flow either from the soul and nature, or from nature alone. What is ruled by the soul and nature is animated; what is from nature alone, inanimate."[156]

The aim of William of St Thierry's work was to substantiate his own speculations on humankind as microcosm within God's Creation by connecting the physics of the body to those of the soul. Doing so, he drew parallels between body and soul that can be considered analogies as part of creating a 'symbolic understanding'.[157] However, it appears he did not intend for these analogies to be necessarily metaphorical in nature. The *Letter on the Soul* by Isaac of Stella carries similar properties: it attempts to tackle the same inconsistencies and problems that arise when considering the body and soul, and humanity's relation to the divine. Where William stays close to the ancient sources he refers to, Isaac of Stella presents his knowledge of these sources in a more indirect way. His classification of the powers of the soul uses the 'golden chain of being', his own symbol for the relationship between all the levels of the universe.[158] Both authors draw together the physics of the body and soul through analogies of their functions and classifications. These parallels are meant to make the functions of the soul graspable, but do not appear to hide a deeper meaning than that. This is not the case with the other analogies we will discuss in this chapter.

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[155] *De Conversione*, 20.

[156] *The Nature of the Body and the Soul*, 111.

[157] *Three treatises on man*, 50.

[158] This concept of the golden chain is further explained in: B. McGinn, *The Golden Chain: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Isaac of Stella* (Michigan 1972).

Biblical references

The second category of biblical references, briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, deserve a more detailed analysis. They are explicitly present in several of the sources, for example in *De Consideratione, De Conversione, De Diligendo Deo,* and naturally in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. Their incidence varies from short quotes and direct references to long expositions and lengthy transcriptions of Bible verses. An example of the first sort comes from the *Apologia,* as Bernard discusses the presence of lustrous décor and riches in churches and monasteries:

> "Finally, what are these things to poor men, to monks, to spiritual men? Unless perhaps at this point the words of the poet may be countered by the saying of the Prophet, "Lord, I have loved the beauty of your house and the place where your glory dwells." I agree, let us put up with these things which are found in the church, since even if they are harmful to the shallow and avaricious, they are not to the simple and devout. But apart from this, in the cloisters, before the eyes of the brothers while they read – what is that ridiculous monstrosity doing, an amazing kind of deformed beauty and yet a beautiful deformity."[159]

In this instance, a short quote is used to subvert possible criticism on Bernard's attitude on the subject. He was strongly against the use of gold and excessive ornaments in churches and monasteries, as this could distract from the glory of God Himself and might encourage people to pursue these material riches. This was in line with Cistercian ideas on how the cloister should look, bare of anything unnecessary to ensure one could seek God without interruption.[160] Art in a monastic setting should facilitate the quest for God, not distract from it.[161] The biblical quote might have been used as an argument against his views. By incorporating it in his text Bernard protects himself against those who would use it against him. Similarly, in *De Consideratione,* a letter he wrote to Pope Eugenius III, Bernard uses biblical quotes to strengthen his arguments as he warns the Pope not to lose himself in his duties. For this purpose, short references to the Bible are sufficient to support his words.

Another example is the following fragment from *De Conversione*:

> "What wonder then if the soul does not at all perceive its own wound, seeing that, forgetful of itself and wholly absent from itself, it has gone away into a far country? But

[159] *Apologia,* 106.

[160] Montanari, 'A sublime alliance', in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 21-30, 24.

[161] E. Freeman, 'Cistercian Nuns and Art in the Middle Ages,' in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts,* 175-186, 180.

> the day will come when, returned to itself, it learns how cruelly it has eviscerated itself on the pretext of its wrecked chase.
>
> Yet without doubt it is rather after death that this return will be, when all the gates of the body, by which the soul had been wont to wander forth and fruitlessly to interest itself in the fashion of this world which passes away, will be shut so that no longer is there open any exit from itself."[162]

A direct quote of the Bible is lacking in this fragment, but its contents are strikingly similar to the text of I Corinthians 7:31: "Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away." The fragment from *De Conversione* carries with it a similar message; do not get too attached to the material world, as it is fleeting and perishable. Bernard builds upon this by connecting it to an image of the ignorant soul, wounded by worldly influences and sin, and emphasises the threat this injury poses. The soul, blissfully unaware of the damage throughout life, will be forced to see the ravages once the body perishes and the soul is 'returned to itself'. By then it will be too late to mend the wound, he states, as "no longer will it be possible to do penance, but only to suffer penance".[163] While this fragment uses the biblical text in a more indirect and supporting way than the previous example, its function is similar. In both cases, the biblical quote or reference serves to reinforce the author's argument and convince the reader of its reliability.

The lengthy copies and variations of Bible verse in the sources, although more rare, serve a similar purpose. They are used to substantiate the claims made by the author and illustrate the views described in the text. However, there is a subtle difference in how the Bible verses are used. These lengthy quotes are being analysed in the sources by the authors themselves and subsequently used to form and substantiate their own views. In a way, the author is contemplating the biblical texts and honing their own insight into them through writing about them. Doing so, the biblical texts contribute to the 'larger picture' the author is trying to create: their own perception of religion and the world. A fine example of this can be found in *De Diligendo Deo,* where pages 13 to 16 contain a lengthy speech on the *Song of Solomon* and its description of the Bride and Bridegroom. Here, Bernard provides us with a variation of the biblical text, magnified and supplied with detailed descriptions. His use of words bears a strong resemblance to the original biblical text and the metaphors used therein; the fruits and flowers in the Bride's garden are described, just as their growth, their perfection, and their

[162] *De Conversione,* 9.
[163] Ibidem.

scents. This will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter. Actual quotes of biblical text are sparingly used to colour the author's narrative, but it is his own interpretation of the Bible that makes up the bulk of these drawn-out metaphors. What makes these lengthy explanations of biblical thought different from the author's own sermons is their contemplative purpose. Reading them, the reader is given insight in the author's mind as they meditate on the Bible and its message; it is as if they are thinking aloud. The lengthy quotes don't necessarily seek to convince the reader, where the shorter quotes aim to do just that.

The short quotes are meant to support the argument of the author in that specific text. For instance, *De Consideratione* aims to remind the Pope of his duty to his own soul and well-being, and the quotes are abundantly used to convince the reader of this. *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, similarly, aims to illustrate the importance of free will and consent concerning sin and vice. These and numerous other texts are clearly meant to convince the reader of the author's views. The quotes and references to the Bible serve to support these views and 'prove' their worth by borrowing some of the biblical authority these references carry. In summary: the texts containing the lengthy discussions of biblical texts are more often reflective and serve to deepen the spiritual knowledge, while the short quotes serve to illustrate and strengthen the argument the author aims to make.

Original mystical allegories

The third category of references to the *non-naturals* that can be found in the sources is similar to this latter kind of biblical quotes as it has a comparable use; it serves to convince the reader of the author's views. Besides that, it also shares some qualities of the first category as it is not always clear whether or not the claims are meant to be taken literally or not. This blurring of the lines between metaphor and medical facts in the sources is most obvious when we look at the discourse on the senses and the soul.

As established in the previous chapter, there is a distinct connection between the senses and morality in the sources. As the latter has an important mental component, its effects would be most noticeable in the 'grey area' of the body: the mind. This is in line with Bernard's thought on these vices as he considers our will, a wholly mental ability, to be our strongest weapon against temptation. It is difficult, however, to determine where the sources stop describing the dangerous influences of poor morals and start turning into metaphors. Consider the following fragment from the *Commentary on The Song of Songs* as Bernard discusses slander and gossip:

> "For every slanderer first of all betrays that he himself is devoid of love. And secondly, his purpose in slandering can only be to inspire hatred and contempt in his audience for the victim of his slander. The venomous tongue strikes a blow at charity in the hearts of all within hearing, and if possible kills and quenches it utterly; worse still, even the absent are contaminated by the flying word that passes from those present to all within reach. See how easily and in how short a time this swift-moving word can infect a great multitude of men with its sickly malice."[164]

There is an intermingling of metaphor and more literal warnings as he speaks of a 'venomous tongue' striking a blow against the hearts of those who hear its words. These 'blows' and the 'venomous tongue' itself are clearly metaphors in this discourse against slander. The next sentence, however, is less clear about this: "even the absent are contaminated by the flying word that passes from those present to all within reach". This is very much related to the idea that the properties of sensory impressions were thought to travel through the air as 'forms' or 'virtues', impressing these qualities upon those that happen to pick it up. It could, therefore, quite literally contaminate the *spirit* of those hearing the slanderous words, as they would carry negative and harmful properties with them. This spreading of the qualities would affect everyone in reach of hearing, whether they were participating in the conversation or not. This literal and metaphorical 'infection' is just one of many examples found in the sources where metaphorical thought on health and morality was connected to a very literal concept of disease and bodily harm.

Another example of this intermingling can be found in the following extract from the *Commentary on The Song of Songs*:

> "Just as the troubled eye, then, cannot gaze on the peaceful sun because of its unlikeness, so the peaceful eye can behold it with some efficacy because of a certain likeness. If indeed it were wholly equal to it in purity, with a completely clear vision it would see it as it is, because of the complete likeness. And so when you are enlightened you can see even now the Sun of Justice that "enlightens every man who comes into this world," according to the degree of the light he gives, by which you are made somehow like him; but see him as he is you cannot, because not yet perfectly like him."[165]

[164] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 24, 4.
[165] Ibidem, sermon 31, 2.

Sight was considered to be caused by the *animal spirit* 'filling' the eye and illuminating it, extending outward to mix with the air and be changed by it.[166] The purity of the *spirit*, then, would affect the purity of sight; corrupted bodies would also have tainted *spirit*, resulting in dimmed and troubled sight. It was generally believed that 'likeness' between the brightness or purity of the *spirit* and that of another light source (e.g. the sun) enabled us to see it more clearly.

The fragment above describes this in the first sentence, perfectly in line with thought on the *non-naturals*. However, Bernard quickly elevates this concept to spiritual levels as he states that religious enlightenment will also enable one to see the 'Sun of Justice', or Jesus. The 'purity' of the body becomes connected and interwoven with the purity of the soul. Similar to the thought described above, a corrupted soul would cause troubled sight in a less literal sense; it would strengthen bad morals and make one more susceptible to vice. The pure soul, on the contrary, possessed a greater 'likeness' to God's purity and therefore could move closer to Him through its enlightenment.

The tendency to incorporate the ancient notions on the *non-naturals* into a discourse on morality and virtue can be found throughout the sources. Through drawing upon the knowledge of physical health, parallels are drawn between vice, behaviour and one's constitution. Consider this description of the third degree of pride, which Bernard considers to be 'unseasonable merriment':

> "As he thinks of nothing but what is pleasant without considering whether it is lawful, he can neither retain laughter not hide his unseasonable merriment. A bladder swells when it is full of wind, but if a small hole is pricked in it and it is squeezed, it creaks as it collapses, and the air does not rush out at once, but is gradually expelled and gives out frequent intermittent sounds. In like manner when a monk has filled his mind with vapid and vulgar thoughts, the flood of folly which cannot, owing to the rule of silence, find full and free vent, is thrown out from his narrow jaw in guffaws of laughter. He constantly hides his face as if ashamed, compresses his lips, and clenches his teeth. He

[166] "Now the optic nerve coming from the brain is hollow, so as to supply enough spirit for sight. When it reaches the eyes it so spread as to surround the vitreous sheath. The spirit of sight, leaving the brain, strikes the sheath and illumines the eye. This brings it about that the crystalline, which is the most transparent and clearest, quickly adapts itself to colours. For the spirit of seeing, clarified in the hollow of the nerves, leaves and passes to the clarity of the crystalline humour, and from there, going outside, mixes with the air of day. When it mixes with the air they are both easily and very rapidly changed. For the air and the spirit mix easily with the colours of the things seen. The spirit that goes out from the crystalline humour and is changed, quickly changes the crystalline. When the mind which is in the lobe of the brain senses this change, it discerns exterior things by their colours; through colours it understands the shape, quantity, and motion of bodies. The very clear air of day gives as much help to this spirit as the brain gives to the nerves. For the nerve carries sensation and motion from the brain and brings it to its members." *The Nature of the Body and the* Soul, 119.

laughs loudly without meaning to do so, and even against his will. And when he has stopped his mouth with his fists he is frequently heard to sneeze."[167]

In this fragment, 'unseasonable merriment' is the vice that causes harm. Its presence is explained by drawing a parallel between a bladder full of wind and a mind filled with "vapid and vulgar thoughts"; both were considered to be under some pressure to vent their contents, with similar audible consequences. This analogy between the mind and a bladder full of wind could simply be criticism on the monk's conduct and attitude. The last sentence, however, creates a connection between the behaviour, the vice behind it and a bodily reaction linked to illness: sneezing. While it is easy enough to see the congruence between sneezing and a supposed need to vent pent-up thoughts, by mentioning this physical response Bernard suggests a correlation between the vice and sneezing. Due to the connection to a bodily function, it is also more difficult to regard the parallel between the mind filled with vulgar thought and a bladder full of air as just an analogy; if it was just a metaphor, the physical response ascribed to it would be irrelevant.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the sources possess a significant amount of imagery connected to nature, such as flowers, trees, and rivers and springs. The most obvious analogies are references to the inner garden of humankind, where the soul as Bride sits amidst the flowers and fruits of her virtues, waiting for her beloved Bridegroom. This place is considered to be the inner chamber where the mind dwells when one is praying, contemplating, or, in some cases, sleeping. On top of that, it is where one may catch a glimpse of eternity and be visited by God:

"…seated on flowers and surrounded by friends, that is by good habits and holy virtues, she may at last gain entrance to the chamber of the King, for whose love she longs. There, when silence have been made in heaven for a space, it may be of half an hour, she rests calmly in those dear embraces, herself asleep, but her heart on the watch grow she may in the present range over those regions of hidden truth – on whose memory she will feast as soon as she returns to herself – there she sees things invisible and hears things unutterable, of which it is not lawful for man to speak."[168]

This inner garden or chamber is described to reflect the state of the mind that inhabits it. Virtues and good habits would adorn it with flowers, fruit and their sweet fragrances. These would 'lure' the Bridegroom or God to the soul, where He could enjoy the inner field of

[167] *De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae,* 73-74.
[168] Ibidem, 44.

flowers, fruits and perfect crops grown by the soul's devotion to Him.[169] The sources lack a description of how the inner garden of a sinner would look, but there are some allusions to it scattered throughout the texts. Consider for example the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*: "Long did I lie in the slough of the marsh, filthy with all kinds of vices," where Bernard speaks of his own sinful past.[170] Although not quite a garden, the vision of a filthy marsh comes close to what we might expect from the inner chamber of a sinner.

There are some subtle variances in the descriptions of humanity's inner garden: in some cases, the sources speak of a chamber or even just a bed, where elsewhere they describe a garden or a field. It also remains unclear whether this chamber is the place where the soul dwells or whether it is actually the soul itself that is decorated by its virtue, as both options are described. The former seems closer to the biblical description of the inner garden where the soul meets God, while the latter would seem to fit better within the thought of the *non-naturals*; it would make sense that the soul, which is said to be affected by virtue and vice, would be the part that would get 'decorated' or corrupted. Bernard seems to support the both options in his texts, although the sources that are more biblical in nature appear to favour the first option whereas the sources that reflect his personal ideas support the latter.[171]

A similar discourse would fit the mentions of rivers, fountains and springs in the sources. Closely related to the symbolism of the garden as it stems from the same Bible verses, there is some overlap within the meaning of these analogies:

> "God only knows the delights the Holy Ghost reveals to His beloved, by what inspiration He awakens and recruits the senses of the soul, and with what odours He refreshes it. This is "a garden closed, a fountain sealed," but the waste water runs through public places, and at these I may quench my thirst, and then give drink to others. The water runs in four great streams; or, to return to the former figure, the Church is refreshed by four rare perfumes whose ingredients are all heavenly, and they fill the whole house, attracting the beloved from the four quarters of the world."[172]

[169] "He comes with eagerness, and delights to dwell in souls that He sees are devoted to meditation, carefully set on gathering in the fruit of His Passion, and the glorious flowers of His Resurrection." *De Diligendo Deo,* 14.

[170] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 3, 3.

[171] As an example of his work supporting the latter option that it is the soul itself that is adorned, consider the following fragment: "The adornment of the body would not be worried about so much if it were not that the soul had been previously neglected, unadorned with virtues." *Apologia,* 102.

[172] *De Diligendo Deo,* 85. Quote within the fragment stems from *Song of Solomon* 4:12. The rare perfumes he mentions are discussed more thoroughly in the Commentary on the Song of Songs.

The soul is described as a fountain, closed off from the world, but whose waters are available for all to drink from.[173] This can be interpreted as the influences one's soul or perhaps one's mind can have on others through the content of the 'waters' they spread. Within these analogies, there appears to be a focus on the divine touch within these waters, as they speak widely of them as pure and sparked by virtue. There is little mention of what sin would do to this fountain. It appears, then, that this fountain is also a channel through which God can reach you, similar to the inner garden where He could be found:

> "Chaste thoughts, just judgments, holy desires -- are they not all streams from that one spring? If the waters that surround us inevitably return to the sea by hidden underground channels, only to gush forth again without fail and without weariness for the refreshing of our sight and the relief of our needs, why should not those spiritual streams return unerringly and without ceasing to their native source, and flow back without interruption to irrigate our souls?"

The connection made between the soul and the mind, which we have encountered in the sources before, is apparent here as well when Bernard speaks of the power of consideration:

> "…it purifies the very fountain, that is the mind, from which it springs. Then it governs the affections, directs our actions, corrects excesses, softens the manners, adorns and regulates the life, and, lastly, bestows the knowledge of things divine and human alike."

He also uses the symbolism of the fountain when speaking of the heart of St Paul: "His heart was a fountain of sweet fragrance that radiated far and wide."[174] The fountain, then, describes our heart, our soul and our mind, and the waters that stream from it would be the influences they have on the world. As stated in the previous chapter, the heart, soul, and mind appear to be somewhat interchangeable within Bernard's texts. It remains unclear whether he considers them one entity, a kind of composite lacking defined borders, or that they simply have similar characteristics and influences.

Another important aspect of this last category is the language used by the Cistercian authors when they discuss health, vice and virtue, and contemplation. Whether they discuss food and drink and the corresponding flavours, or the possession of fine clothing and its aesthetic appeal, the sources denounce earthly pleasures and giving in to the bodily senses. Sober living, rejecting excess, and a focus on God should be one's main concern; any

[173] Also described in: Montanari, 'A Sublime Alliance,' in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 21-40, 22.

[174] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, sermon 12, 2.

pleasurable sensory experience would only distract from this righteous path and harm both body and soul. While this held true for all humanity, Bernard considered it especially important to monks: "…we who regard as dung all things shining in beauty, soothing in sound, agreeable in fragrance, sweet in taste, pleasant in touch – in short, all material pleasures – in order that we may win Christ."[175] This fragment makes it abundantly clear that pleasure in any form would distract from 'winning Christ'. However, reaching Christ is described with the very same concept of pleasure and joy that the sources so strongly denounce.

This apparent paradox, mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, does not seem to bother the authors. Without hesitation, they describe virtues and the religious experience of Christianity as sweet and light, deliciously perfumed, and "delightful and pleasant."[176] This "sweetness of God" is lauded to be unimaginable, or as the Bible states, above honey.[177] *De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae* does something similar, describing the path to God as a pleasant meal with virtues as alluring spices and aromas:

> "Truly love is delightful and pleasant food, supplying, as it does, rest to the weary, strength to the weak, and joy to the sorrowful. […] Love is good food, which, as the central dish on Solomon's dinner table, by the aroma of various virtues as by the fragrance of different condiments, refreshes those who are hungry and delights those who give the refreshment."[178]

In this fragment, the meal consists of three courses: those of bitter humility, sweet love, and spiritual vision as one reaches God. This description is obviously an analogy for the proper order of succession if one longed to reach God as, just like at dinner, you cannot have the dessert if you have not had your entrée and main course yet. Regardless, to an outsider it would seem odd that the very indulgence that should be avoided is used in an analogy for spiritual growth. This kind of analogy was rather common in religious texts. Consider the following fragment from *De Diligendo Deo*:

> "The thought of God is sweet to those who sigh after Him, and with every breath recall His presence; but, far from appeasing their hunger for Him, it increases it. This He foretold in these words: "They that eat Me shall yet hunger,"[179]

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[175] *Apologia*, 105.

[176] *De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae*, 13. References made to 'sweetness' and 'pleasure' are numerous throughout the sources.

[177] Sirach 24:27.

[178] *De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae*, 13-14.

[179] *De Diligendo Deo, 17.* The Bible verse stems from Ecclesiastics 24:21.

The biblical descriptions of the 'sweetness of God' and humanity's unsatable hunger for Him are rather common, as are the references to sweet aromas and pleasure. Most of these are obviously metaphors, speaking of the "bread of the soul" that nourishes the spirit just like food nourishes the body.[180] This paradoxical use of words is possibly the best example of the friction described at the start of this chapter. To Bernard and other Cistercian authors, there was a clear distinction between the inner beauty and pleasure they describe in these analogies and the outer pleasures that should be scorned.[181] Describing spiritual and religious experiences with the same words as one would use while discussing bodily sensations created a way for people to learn about the mystical in terms they could understand. By making these religious experiences graspable, it was easier to preach about them and show people how they should be interpreted.

The double meaning of the words and imagery, then, was accessible only to those who were already familiar with it. This explains two aspects of the sources: the paradoxical use of sensory experience and imagery when describing religious matters, and the connecting of biblical imagery to health and disease. The former can be explained as a continuation of this common practice to use allegory to make the invisible visible. The same imagery and double meanings people were familiar with were used to illustrate new arguments or fortify old ones. Often, these allegories were based on biblical ones as these offered a strong connection between spiritual and earthly matters, and most people would be familiar with them. This also brings us to the latter aspect that is explained by this practice: by connecting the known imagery and frameworks to new explanations of bodily matters, it was easier to explain the knowledge and ensure it was handled in a correct way.

So what exactly do all these examples tell us?

There is a rich environment of analogies, symbolism and hidden meanings present in the sources, as could be expected from its origin. The influence of biblical language is easily discernable, although more obvious in some cases than in others. This neatly fits into the type of language we expect from twelfth-century monasteries, as described at the start of this chapter: inspired by the Bible and fitted into a more personal, emotional rhetoric without dissolving into fantasy.

[180] See for example *Apologia*, 96-97.

[181] P.-A. Burton, '"Deformed Beauty" or "Beautiful Deformity": The Aesthetics of the Cross as a mystical ethic of beauty in Bernard of Clairvaux,' in: Kinder and Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts*, 31-34, 31.

Besides this, we can observe the strong presence of sensory perception and the influence of the *non-naturals*. Part of this can be explained through the imagery used in the Bible, as many of these analogies depended on sensory descriptions to make religious explanations more 'graspable'. However, there is clearly more to it than just that. While the descriptions of inner gardens and fountains are little more than extended explanations and personal interpretations of the Bible, the other examples given in this chapter focus more strongly on the senses and their effect on humankind. It is clear that environmental factors, like those described in the thought on the *non-naturals*, were considered to be of importance to the health and general wellbeing of people. Within these Cistercian sources, however, the medical thought on environments and the *non-naturals* is expanded to include an environment of good morals and virtues.[182] Perhaps even more important than the quality of sleep, activity and air was the quality of one's mind and soul. Just as the other *non-naturals* overlapped and influenced each other, the spiritual environment affected the senses and was affected by them.

[182] This is more or less made explicit by Bernard in his *De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae*, 44: "Thence, seated on flowers and surrounded by friends, that is by good habits and holy virtues, she may at last gain entrance to the chamber of the King, for whose love she longs."

Conclusion

In this paper, I have analysed a body of Cistercian texts with the aim of answering the following question: "In what way was ancient medical thought on health and the *non-naturals* adapted and incorporated into twelfth-century Cistercian views on man and the soul?" Through this question, I have attempted to add a new dimension to the paradoxical relation between the *locus horroris* and the *locus amoenus*: as humankind either triumphing over the sinfulness of nature, or as benefiting from its God-given qualities.

Starting with the context in which the selected Cistercian sources were produced and some basic information on the Cistercian Order, I have offered a general overview of the circumstances and environments in which the selected sources were written. Within this context, I have examined the sources and listed the various ways in which the *non-naturals* and the concept of sensory perception are used by the authors. To come to an answer to my research question, I have subsequently analysed the references and mentions of senses and environment to grasp the deeper meaning of the sources.

The statements about medicine and health are various and diverse throughout most of the selected sources. They range from declaring the importance of a balanced lifestyle to warnings against bodily desires and vice. The sources contain several descriptions how the environment influences body and mind that are strikingly similar to the original ancient thought. Besides that, the sources show how the concept of the *non-naturals* has been altered and expanded.

The adaptations made to the thought on the *non-naturals* are often to include those aspects that would be considered harmful to humanity in twelfth-century Christian West-Europe. The presence of religion is essential, as it had a strong influence on what was considered to be 'good' and 'bad', or in this case, 'healthy' and 'toxic'. A strong connection between the ancient thought on the *non-naturals* and the concept of morality can therefore be found in the sources. The Cistercian sources appear to have been part of a movement that reinterpreted Greek and Roman medical texts in a way that vilified disease by connecting it to sin and vice. Religion, in turn, became connected to the corresponding remedies and morality and the health of the soul became a necessary part of the general well-being of humankind. The appropriation of the thought on the *non-naturals* into a more religious context is also made clear by the spiritual and medical language used in the sources. Due to the connection drawn between bodily health and the health of the soul, the use of medical vocabulary in a

religious context seems fitting. The word ‘corruption’ was used for both body and soul, and was closely related to what we would nowadays call infection. It was defined as imbalance that undermines wellbeing; the connection to the *non-naturals* as described here is clear. Tending to such a spiritual wound required cleansing the soul and ensuring no further harm could come to it; one had to control their behaviour, their minds, but also their environment. We can find similar use of medical vocabulary in various religious remarks. God or Christ is described as healer, capable of saving our souls from corruption and ‘death’, and the Christian religion is defined as medicine.

The result is the appropriation of a body of medical thought into a more spiritual framework, where the rules that apply to the physical body are elevated to apply to the soul. The humours and the *non-naturals* affected one’s personality and health, and fuelled the *spirits* present in the body; not just a person’s personality and bodily health are affected by their environment, but their soul as well. The one who ignores the demands of their body risks losing their health or even their life. However, too strong a focus on bodily desire was just as harmful for both body and soul. The importance of balance, a prominent part of the Cistercian lifestyle, is unambiguously present in the sources.

Returning to the paradox in the Cistercian views on nature: descriptions of *locus horroris* and *locus amoenus* are both present in the sources. Nature is depicted as malevolent and powerful, a danger to those whose life should revolve around the spiritual and who should avoid earthly temptation. And yet, they surround themselves with lush gardens and herald the calming, healing properties of God’s Creation and use its qualities in their metaphorical conversations with God. Through this paper, I hope to have added a new dimension to our knowledge of this ambiguous Cistercian perspective on nature.

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